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WET-FLY FISHING

E. M. TOD

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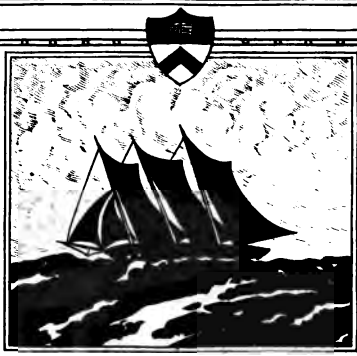

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E. M. TOD

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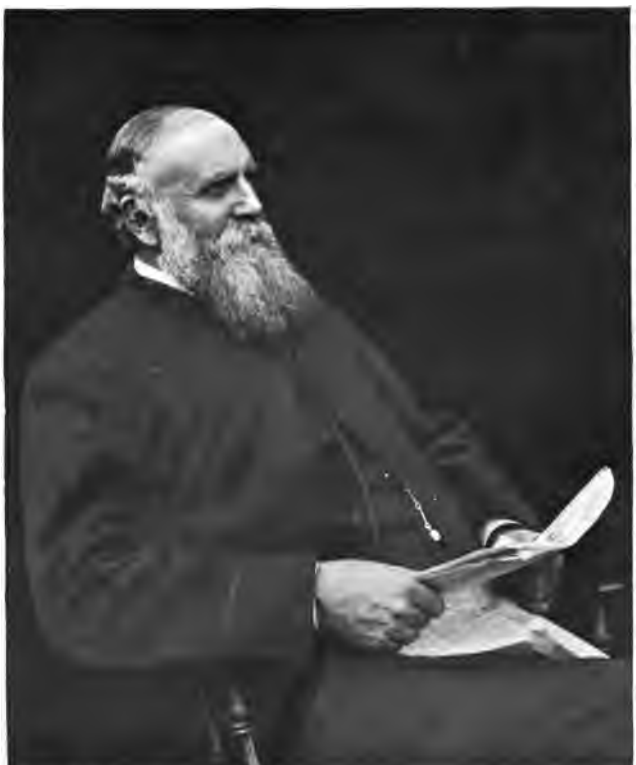


Yours very truly
Ewen M Todd

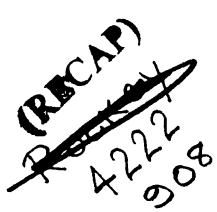
TO THE BELOVED MEMORY

OF

ALEXANDER MONTGOMERIE BELL,

M.D.

TRUE SPORTSMAN AND LOYAL FRIEND.



PREFACE

It would indeed be a graceless sin of omission did I not record with gratitude the thanks which are due to the friends who have (in one way or another) earned them so well, by their kind help, advice, and sympathy during the writing and publication of this book.

As I must begin with some one, permit me to commence by saying with what sincerity I record my obligation to my friend, Dr. Spence, of Edinburgh, for the advantages I have had from the use of his extensive library of angling works.

I should have liked to have said much more, but my hand was held. I will, therefore, merely content myself by adding

that no one could have been kinder or more considerate than he has been.

I also wish to tender my very hearty thanks to my friend, Mr. Walter Puttick, for the beautiful sketches with which he has embellished this work; for the care and interest which he has shown in their production; and, not least, for carrying out my own ideas so well.

His sketches will make so much more clear and simple my written instructions, that I seem to owe him a double debt.

Further, I wish to thank very sincerely my friend, Mr. Andrew Smith, W.S., who edited (as a hobby) that excellent, though comparatively short-lived journal, *The Scots Angler*, and who is the President of the Trout Anglers' Club, Edinburgh; for the humorous and kind letter by which he answered my request to be allowed to copy from the volume of *The Scots Angler* in my possession, an article which I contributed to its May issue, in the year 1897;

entitled "How to land Trout expeditiously while Wading," an article which, I trust, will repay perusal, now that it has been incorporated in this book.

The two names next on my list happen to be those of father and son. The first is no less a personage than the venerable and much-respected head of the publishing firm of Messrs. Sampson Low, Marston & Co.—I allude to Mr. Edward Marston.

Mr. Marston's kindness towards the writer has been shown in many pleasant, unobtrusive ways, all the more appreciated.

He is well known in piscatorial circles, through the medium of his charming angling-holiday books, two of which I have had the honour and pleasure of reviewing, and I have no hesitation in disclosing his identity with that of their author, "The Amateur Angler."

My cordial thanks are most willingly recorded to his son, my own personal friend, Mr. R. B. Marston, the Editor

of the *Fishing Gazette*, who is also a Director of the publishing house.

During the writing of this handbook he has treated the author thereof with uniform courtesy and kindness. I fear I must also add, with much forbearance, seeing that the necessary correspondence has had to be carried on between the respective capitals of England and Scotland, a very serious addition to the burden of so busy a man.

I have had to control a strong desire to mention the names of two old and dear angling friends, in whose pleasant companionship many of the happiest hours of my life have been passed; but as they were not *directly* connected with the production of this book, I had to refrain.

There is yet one small person, with the mention of whose name I shall conclude a preface already longer than I had intended; that of my dear little grandson, Charles Rudolph Fielding, at present

aged fourteen months. He is, alas, so ignorant of all the pleasures and mysteries of wet-fly fishing, that I am placing his name on record, in the hope that, perchance when I am gone, he may study what I have written herein, and, starting where I have left off, may become, not only a skilful but a scientific fly-fisherman, and as great an enthusiast as his grandfather was before him.

E. M. TOD.

EDINBURGH, *March*, 1903.

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WET-FLY FISHING

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—HOW TO FISH METHODICALLY WITH THE WET FLY.

Fishing with the wet fly is but a term. It is, however, a very correct term, for the purely wet-fly fisherman never really seeks to make his fly float on the surface of the water; never oils his fly with paraffin oil; never greases his reel-line with deer's fat, and does not devote to a rising trout the time that would seem all too long to listen to a sermon; or to run and kill a 30-lb. salmon. Battles have been lost and won, in less time than is sometimes devoted to the ensnaring of an Itchen trout.

It would be, in these advanced days, impossible to tackle a work such as this without referring to the dry-fly school: it would be equally unwise and absurd to

keep on comparing the merits of the two systems, in the body of the book itself.

The men who are the most dogmatic, exclusive, and narrow-minded are they who fish—year out year in—one river, or class of river; be it of the "wet" or "dry" fly type or "school." To such, Tennyson's words seem to me very appropriate, "They take the rustic murmur of their bourg for the great wave that echoes round the world"; and I maintain that, as in social life, so is it in angling. Nothing sweeps away narrow and unworthy prejudices like travelling, since travel means meeting with men of all shades of thought.

The writer, who is also a freemason, is quite sure that the freemasonry of the angler's craft is hardly less sacred, since it is, as it ought to be, a brotherhood; embodying within it, as does freemasonry, men of all shades of opinion.

In the writer's opinion, the dry fly is neither more nor less than the slow and gradual evolution of its projenitor the wet fly, adapted to rivers which are specially suitable.

The more we fish, the more do trout become educated and knowing; and whether it be in Scotland or elsewhere, when trout are few and far between, or many, but

knowing to a degree; the tendency will be for men who have tried all they know with the wet fly, to take a leaf out of one's neighbour's book, and try what the dry fly will do on occasion.

Let me be very clear about this, however, lest I may be misunderstood.

I have no patience whatever with the extreme purist of the dry fly, who, in the month of April or beginning of May would not unbend by a hair's breadth, were he placed on the Deveron or any such Scottish river.

At present, I should advise the southern angler who comes to fish in Scotland, to let the dry fly be "his crutch rather than his staff," on the majority of our rivers; and especially in the early spring.

He may leave Euston or King's Cross, congratulating himself that a man who can take the trout of the Itchen and Test need "fear no foe in shining armour." He may even "thank Heaven that he is not as other men," nor "even as this publican" (of the wet-fly persuasion), who, by the way, may be his brother-in-law and a hard nut to crack, by the side of a good Scotch trout stream, with his wet flies and his dry jokes, all the same.

In war the main object is to kill or disable the enemy. In fishing it is very much the same thing, and the man who wastes his energies drying or oiling his fly, when he should be creeling trout after trout, lays himself open to the criticism of the French General, when he witnessed the Balaklava charge.

Each system has its place and time. On the other hand, he who would venture to win fresh laurels as a wet-fly fisherman, in the rivers presided over by the dry-fly expert, would return to the north a sadder and a wiser man. Of this, there is not the shadow of a doubt, any more than that the skill of the dry-fly fisherman, as practised in these particular waters, is of an exceptionally high order. His flies are a much closer imitation of the natural fly than ours are, as a rule. The average dry-fly fisherman, moreover, has a much more intimate knowledge of entomology than has the average wet-fly expert; and yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, I declare that he but wastes his time if he fishes for trout in many of our rapid rivers during the cream of the fly-fishing season, solely as a purist of his own "school." This is my opinion, and I give it for what

it is worth. That, *at times*, when fishing a Scottish river, he would be wise, like "old Uncle Ned," to "cast down the shovel and the hoe, and take up the fiddle and the bow;" in fact, to use his dry fly, is beyond all question, and the perfect fly-fisherman, unquestionably, is he who is quite at home with *both* methods, and has the judgment to know when to apply each to advantage.

At present, I hold that the expert wet-fly fisherman is still master of the situation on the large (very large) majority of Scottish and north of England rivers, and a very considerable change will have to take place ere he is knocked off his stool, by the rising generation of dry-fly fishermen.

In the first place, trout are numerous rather than large in most of our Scottish rivers, and it does not pay to waste the brief but valuable time of the "rise" over any single trout. When our streams are free from pollution and poaching, and "free fishing" has been supplanted by a wiser system; when new varieties of trout have been introduced, and with them the culture of natural food for their support (without which the larger-sized trout never could be expected to thrive and multiply), then, and

then only, do I seem to see "the disciple of the dry fly" "wiping the eye" of his wet-fly brother throughout Scotland. It is certainly most desirable that our rivers should run pure, and that trout fishing should be as carefully guarded in Scotland, as it is in England, on private and club waters.

I have dear friends belonging to both "schools," and I am, I trust, wholly without controversial bitterness. All the same, I hold that the time is far distant when the dry-fly invader from the south will be able to wrest from the expert north country fly fisherman, the premier position on the streams and rivers of his "ain Countree." In other words I hold that if the men of the dry fly go to Scotland, they must do as Scotland does (in the main) at the present day.

Before I close this introductory chapter, I desire to say a few words on a subject which I rather shrink from handling; I mean the well-known and, to my own thinking, very tiresome jokes about fishermen's "tales" concerning fish and fishing.

Nothing can be more contemptible than the publication of false reports, and the man who needs to adopt such tactics is

"a puir creetur, sir, a puir creetur," as old Carlyle once snapped out to a man who had irritated him beyond bearing. Gillies (especially those connected with a fishing hotel) are especially guilty; but if their patrons had a higher sense of honour the evil would not exist. Hotel-keepers also have their own temptation, and I regret to add that the reports sent to newspapers are frequently quite unreliable. The commonest of all forms of deception is the placing of the united "takes" of two or more anglers to the credit of one. Naturally men rush to waters where such individual (?) takes are still possible—only to find that they have been deceived. When Anthony Trollope visited Australia (many years ago) he discovered that the colonist had a like failing, and in his book his advice to him runs thus: "Don't blow."

I think if there was less "blow" (or brag) amongst fishermen, veracity would reassert itself; and the stigma, which now rests on fishermen, would gradually die a natural death. Much of it is done in joke, doubtless; but in most cases the love of bragging is at the root of the disease.

Be a truthful duffer—if a duffer—and you will enjoy your sport in youth, and

its retrospect in old age; and what more do you want?

I feel inclined now to speak of the "poaching angler," who fills his creel by unfair methods. But is he worth writing about? I think not! He despises himself, and I am of opinion that, in so doing, he places a just estimate upon his own character. We will, therefore, let him severely alone, only hoping that, by degrees, he may be improved off the face of the earth.

In "The Incomplete Angler," by F. C. Burnand, are a few lines which, I think, enable me to end my introductory remarks pleasantly.

"For you must know that a proficient can catch as good a fish as swims with a fine line from one of the poets if he be but careful to let it fall with bated breath."

What wet or dry fly man can do more?

January 1, 1903.

"My dear Tod,

"You have asked me to read this Introduction to your book—the completion of which I shall rejoice to see—and

I have done so, and I am glad to see that you treat the matter so impartially.

"I have been an angler as long as I can remember anything, and that is getting on for half a century; for many years after I began fly-fishing I fished only in the wet-fly style, afterwards I took to the dry-fly style as well; and what I cannot for the life of me see is why one angler should not adopt both styles, as I and many others do. I only wish you had been able to join me, as I hoped you would, on the Tweed, at Kelso, early in May, 1901. I think I could then have proved to you that it pays to use both styles on the Tweed, and not only at different times, but at the same time.

"One afternoon, when fishing on the Upper Floors Water, in about three hours I killed a nice basket of over 12 lbs. of trout, all with the fly, and quite two-thirds with the dry fly. I used your double-hook midges, three on my cast ("Greenwell's Glory" and "Iron Blue" did best). I fished all three flies first dry and then wet. I also fished with two of the flies dry and one wet, or one dry and two wet, and this in the rapid broken water of the streams as well as on the pools. It is a great mistake to think dry-fly fishing must be

confined to slow smooth water. Wherever the natural can float there the artificial can float if properly made, and oiled, and used. It is most interesting to watch your fly coming down dancing on the waves, and then disappear when the brown head of a trout breaks the surface, also to see it pulled under when a trout takes one of the wet flies.

"Ever yours sincerely,

"(Signed) "R. B. MARSTON,

"Editor *F.G.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE FISHING OF BURNS WITH THE WET FLY.

I AM even as a blind man in the deeper mysteries of fishing with the wet fly.

Willingly, nevertheless, shall I speak of the little I know about it, hoping that I may impart some of my enthusiasm to other and younger brethren in the gentle craft. Whilst imparting information, I hope I may be excused when I venture to state, right away at the beginning of my treatise, that the memory of my few big days is seldom with me in "the Silences of Life;" these moments that come to all thinking men when alone, and that will, occasionally, force themselves upon one even in a crowded room or busy thoroughfare.

I repeat, that the very memory of these "big" days is forgotten, all but the butcher's bill; "an' divvle an ounce of the Poethry of Angling" is there in such a day,

unless the circumstances be such as to fix the incidents which form the event in the fisherman's mind, as well as in his diary, for it is a poor thing if the memory is not refreshed by the remembrance of bygone angling delights.

One may sit pleasantly thinking of some absolutely charming hours, or even brief moments, spent in the prosecution of one's pet pastime—fly-fishing—where the plain facts, as recorded in the said diary, would seem to indicate that the particular day in question was one of absolute and disgraceful failure: the results being so modest.

May I give my ideas of what, to *me*, has so often constituted the ideal of a sportsman's "delightful day's fishing"?

First, then, one should be feeling in good health to enjoy it to the full.

Secondly, one must leave behind, as if they had never existed, the cares of life in every shape or form, and be a boy again, keen as mustard, and simply indefatigable in one's application to the business in hand.

An idle fisherman is seldom worth much: keenness goes hand-in-hand with energy.

Let me, then, convey to my readers some of the pictures which have remained

in my brain, when the mere record is dead and buried to all intents and purposes.

And now to my subject!

Let me draw (as best I can) the picture of a day's fly-fishing on a rather large Highland burn, (for, on the smaller burns the "wiggling wum" is the best "fly"). Imagine me, a youth, instead of a grandfather. I have tramped across the hills to my favourite burn. There arrived, my 11 foot 6 inch "Forrest" rod is soon put up, the reel placed in the fittings, and the line passed through the rings. The gut casting-line (only of 2½ feet) is knotted on, and two flies attached thereto: Black hackle for tail fly or Stretcher, and Partridge Orange for the bob fly or dropper. I am now ready to begin. Crouching, I move upwards, and my flies soon cover a nice-looking little pool with one, two, three casts, but without a single response. Moving on, I throw up stream, my flies falling like thistledown on a deep but quiet eddy. This time there is a rise at the dropper, and the trout hooks himself; but, after giving a few wild leaps for freedom, he is free—slightly hooked probably. Nothing discouraged, I let a little more line pass through the rings, and cast again. Here the waters from the

pool above, being literally squeezed between two large boulders, pour down into my own pool, and, near to the edge of this rush, my black hackle is thrown. A trout of ¾ lb. soon fastens, and is leisurely drawn downwards, landed, and encreeled. This process in my upward progress is constantly repeated. Frequently I have to cross the burn wet-foot, so as to fish it to better advantage. I wear no waterproof wading stockings. They would only be an encumbrance while fishing a Highland burn; and youth makes light of wet feet, especially when the said feet are encased in thick knitted worsted socks under a pair of strong shooting boots, well nailed, to make sure the foothold. My basket keeps growing heavier, and my spirits lighter in proportion. At last I sit down to eat my sandwich, and this being soon done, I fall into a musing attitude—not a very common thing at my age. Well, the surroundings are enough to appeal, even to a lad. The music of the stream, the "caller" mountain air, the wild scream of the curlew (the "whaup"), the challenge of the sentinel cock-grouse as he sounds his note of warning, and then *whir-r-rs* off with his covey into a thick bed of fern, the cuckoo's familiar

but quaint note, and hard by, (though the bird himself be perchance out of sight) the sweet song of the sedge warbler.

I drink in these sounds, unconsciously surrendering my young soul to their spell; and then (who has not experienced its weird fascination amid the wild Scottish hills?) comes a strange sensation! Nature has apparently fallen asleep, and when that happens, I strain my ears and listen—listen to the silence.

Suddenly, "I spy strangers in the house." The water-ouzel it is, who has broken the spell.

There he is, in his spotless shirt-front, bobbing and bobbing again. Ah, Rascal! who knows so well as you where to pick up the roe of a spawning fish; your larder at present holdeth not the "caviare" which thy soul loveth. You need not keep on booin', booin', like Sir Pertinax MacSycophant. I have nothing for you, so be off! I continue, kneeling, crawling, and stumbling, the rod continually "waving" the while. At last I draw near to the best pool in the whole burn.

Let me describe it.

A solitary cascade (or linn), where, into the deep black basin beneath, the brown

waters thunder down from the rocks above. See! I have at times to crawl on hands and knees to reach the place I am aiming for; but at length I am enabled to sit down on a large stone, some yards below the tail-end of the pool, and I am glad to mop the perspiration from my brow, and to take a moment's breathing space. As I gaze, a gust of wind shakes that stunted birch tree overhanging its deepest and blackest part—at the further side—but, now a few flies fall upon the surface and slowly move around the eddy. Then, out of the blackness of night, comes a bar of gold! Again and yet again it flashes from fly to fly! I am nineteen, and, as I involuntarily exclaim, "What a thumper!" my heart thumps wildly.

My flies now are Greenwell's Glory for tail fly, and a red hackle for the dropper. Greenwell's Glory is sent forth on an exploring expedition time after time, but nothing comes of it, and yet Greenwell's Glory is a grand explorer. Returning to my stone, I sit down and give myself up to the friendly solace of my pipe—that trout, big on my brain, you bet.

My eyes meanwhile scan the surface of the dark moss-coloured waters.

Presently I observe one small fly, then a second, and a third, at no great distance from the haunt of that cunning old rascal, but a little further up the burn.

Then I see a small "bell," followed by a ring, and this is repeated. The odd thing about it all, is, that no flies now are visible. Can that be my friend's work? Eh? Off comes my dropper, and I have replaced my tail-fly by a red spinner (No. 2, Kendal scale) for luck. The wind has fallen momentarily, and it is a dead calm. Now for it—now, or never. Wading, so as to avoid sending a tell-tale wave before me, and bending low to keep out of sight as far as it is possible for a six-foot lad to do, I deliver an underhand cast. Alas! it is caught by a twig, and I am hung up —but only a moment, for I give one sharp pull and am free, minus the fly, a very easy let off.

Replacing it with another from the same lot, and, wetting the gut well, I make another effort. The fly falls just right, but a breath of wind, bellying the line out, drags it away just as the golden blaze of the form I love, parts the black waters, and tells me that I shall soon be on terms with the king of the pool, my friend of the eddy.

Oh the delights of stalking such a fish at nineteen, ay, or at sixty-nine: if you can.

And now the line is sent, with a side switch, right under the birch tree once more. There is no wind now, and the fly alights very softly. Then there is a wave, and the line tightens. In that same second, a gentle but decided turn of the wrist has driven the steel home. The rod is held sideways, near to, and parallel with, the water, not up; else the words of Burns would be only too true of that trout—

"And safe beneath the shady thorn, defies the angler's art."

for the branches of the birch hang low, and lifting the rod up would be a dangerous game to play at present.

Finding himself collared, he dashes out, and faces the foaming waters of the linn, springing hither and thither in his efforts to shake himself free; but, at last, gasping and beaten, he finds himself lying on a spit of sand, a lovely landing-place, and permits me to knock him on the head. He weighs 1¾ lb., a fine trout, indeed, for such a hill-burn as this.

To give point to my meaning, let me suppose another case. The same pool, the

BURN FISHING. THE LINN POOL.
"The place where the old (trout) died."

[*To face page* 18.

same trout, and the burn in spate, peaty rather than muddy, the lure a worm on a single bait-hook tied upon gut thick enough to land a salmon, and skill nowhere; that wretched trout skulldragged out of the drumly water, and thrown on the bank by sheer force. And there, in a nutshell, you have my idea of sport and of murder.

I shall not touch on the latter subject again.

Such is the poetry of angling, and its prose.

My young friend, make your choice early. It is surely enough to be a true disciple of old Izaac Walton, to love angling for its own sake, and to be content therewith.

Believe me, for it is the truth, that many "a record-breaker" is that, and nothing else. He is "a miserable dog" if he returns home unsuccessful, and quite spiteful, if even his dearest friend has "licked his head off," however fairly.

Let me not be mistaken. Some of the noblest and most unselfish of men and of "fishers" (I love the old word) are also record-breakers, at least occasionally. The combination means the blue ribbon.

And now to my hill-burn again. There is but the one linn, and one other large,

broad and deep pool, like the one you saw me fishing last, in the entire burn. The burn, as you fish upwards, forms a series of tiny pools and cascades. As you get higher and higher, the dropper may be as well removed (for, having landed the big one, the dropper was again added, to fish the rest of the pool).

In conclusion, I will only say of burn-fishing, it has so little of the real art or science of wet-fly fishing about it, that I shall now close this chapter; heartily commending it to all youthful and active "fishers." To those who love solitude amid the hills—as a restorer of the tired body, or the overwrought mind—this branch of angling is simply invaluable, and, as a tonic, is far superior to all the drugs in the British Pharmacopœia.

There is a charm about it, too, which is peculiarly its own. If you go a-fishing to such a place, and find none of the charm I speak of, blame yourself. None the less is it there.

It is many years since I first came under its influence; and, to this day, the remembrance of these golden hours is still fresh, and lovingly cherished.

There is just a touch of sadness, as

one thinks of the days that can never be lived over again—the days of boyhood and of youth.

Rather let us be thankful, in old age, for the hours thus spent in our youth. It is idle to repine that past joys lie behind us.

A quaint old proverb comes to my rescue, and prevents me falling into a more serious vein.

"You cannot eat your pudding, and have it too."

Just so.

CHAPTER III.

THE FISHING OF WATERS WITH THE WET FLY.

In Scotland, running streams are, as a rule, roughly classified into three varieties or grades, namely (1) Burns, (2) Waters, and (3) Rivers.

Every one, I presume, knows what a hill-burn is, and a river is surely big enough to speak for itself. Class No. 2, waters, is at present our subject, and to anglers of the wet-fly school it is one of great and abiding interest. Many of them are famous in song, such as "The Banks of Allan Water," "Braw, braw Lads of Gala Water," and many others. It is not my intention to dwell on this aspect of our Scottish waters, but to look at them solely from their angling point of view. And in that connection, it becomes very important to understand how the methods of fishing any stream of the volume, width, and generally having all the features of "a water," somewhat differ

from the systems usually in vogue amongst wet-fly fishers when fishing the parent rivers. The same *general* principles govern each system or method; which fact, I trust, eventually to make tolerably clear as I proceed with the subject. I fear that I must occasionally mention what is properly named "a water" in Scotland by some other title, for it would never do to land myself in some such absurd sentence as "The water in such 'a water' as this is," etc. In such a case I must speak of a "river," or "small river." "Rivulet" I dislike intensely.

W. C. Stewart, the writer of that very excellent work "The Practical Angler," the first edition of which was issued in 1857, was one of the most famous wet-fly fishermen Scotland ever produced.

I must qualify this statement. It was as a fisher of medium sized streams; in fact, of "waters" that he really won his fame; and any one with a full knowledge of his subject, reading Stewart's excellent work, must notice that his teachings are chiefly applicable to the fishing of his beloved "waters."

As a matter of fact, Stewart was not nearly such a successful fly-fisher in any

large body of water, like the Tweed, at least, in its lower reaches. He either was so wedded to waters that he did not care much for rivers, or he was unable to alter his methods. The fact remains, that his fame was that of a fisher of "waters" rather than of "rivers."

Stewart confessed his inferiority to James Baillie (the professional), and refers to him in glowing terms in his work. I remember Stewart quite well, but only by sight. I once heard Baillie's brother play the violin in his cottage. He was gifted musically to a wonderful degree for a man who was wholly self-taught. Both of the brothers Baillie, thus, were evidently men of genius; but alas! theirs was the kind of genius of which the Poet wrote—

> "Genius left to shiver
> Died, it is said,
> On the bank of that River."

Adam Dryden was also a very successful, but professional, fisher of waters, and his tiny book, "Hints to Anglers," is well worth perusal. It is out of print, but can be picked up occasionally at bookstalls.

Stewart, Baillie, and Dryden frequented and loved the same type of streams, in the south of Scotland; as who does not?

Then there was Webster, who wrote "The Angler and the Loop Rod." He chiefly fished the Clyde, also the upper waters of the Tweed. In reading these works, the beginner must remember that trout were plentiful and fishers few, in those good old days. Their records could not be repeated on the same waters to-day.

I think that they yield the very poetry of sport. They can generally be commanded from bank to bank; they consist of a delightful variation of pool and stream, and, further; there is, what there never can be to the same extent, in any large river; an indefinable charm, arising from the angler being generally able to locate the likely places; spoken of by Stewart as "the habitat" of the larger trout. This knowledge only comes with experience. It is not quite so easy to acquire, as it may seem, seeing that trout do not occupy the same places (*a*) in early spring, (*b*) in summer, and (*c*) in autumn; and naturally so: for trout, when in condition, seem to glory in their strength. Hence, you will find them in the strongest runs in summer; whereas, when they are not yet in condition, or are beginning to fall off, their tendency is to seek the quieter waters.

Again, when "a water" runs down to its summer level, trout seek out well-defined stations; but, during a flood, they get scattered all over the place, very often hugging the banks, or even lying under them—for two reasons. First, to pick up worms, etc., which get flooded out of their holes; and second, in order to get out of the full strength of the heavy current.

Stewart's book, when it first appeared, set my ardent young soul on fire. Indeed, it is not too much to say of Stewart, that he did what no man did before him, what no man has ever done since, or ever will do again, viz. he revolutionized the fishing of rivers and waters throughout Scotland. We all owe a deep debt to the author of "The Practical Angler."

I have never regretted becoming his disciple, in respect of the fishing of waters, just as I became, later on, the pupil of Mark Aitken, in whom I recognized the very best exponent I had ever met of the art of fishing rivers; such as the Tweed, or its large tributary the Teviot in its lower reaches.

The men were as different as their methods; and yet, in his own style of stream, each was a past-master in the art.

Much of my own success as an angler I owe to Stewart; but to Mark Aitken I owe far more, since at his hands I received invaluable practical instruction extending over several years. I regret to add that I have never even seen Stewart fishing. Here let me mention that small but excellent booklet, "How to catch Trout," by Three Anglers; published by David Douglas, Castle Street, Edinburgh, in 1890. It is a splendid shilling's-worth, and I advise all wet-fly anglers to invest in the book. I fancy that I have the pleasure of knowing two of the writers, and both are good and clever anglers; and of whom it may be said, "what they don't know is not really worth knowing." I make no apology whatever for quoting the following from its pages.

In that all too brief chapter, "How to fish a small Stream," the writer says, "When there is a strong wind blowing, the shallow water, just above where the stream breaks, should always be tried, as feeding trout often congregate there."

This is typical of the book, and the advice is excellent.

Indeed, if the book possesses any fault, it is that the subjects are too briefly

referred to, and the matter is too severely condensed. I have proved the value of their advice, and with pleasure I add my own testimony to that of the triumvirate aforesaid.

No two waters are quite similar in character.

One flows through a hilly country and is quite easy to wade, because it has a hard bottom of gravel and sand. Another flows sluggishly through a rich agricultural country, and has a muddy, or, perchance, a clay bottom.

Here runs a water embowered amidst bushes and trees; and there flows a water almost destitute of trees, as it passes through some purely pastoral and hilly district. It is surely evident that the local expert, is the angler who ought to be most at home on his own familiar well-wooded stream or streams. For instance, take that beautiful tributary of the Teviot, the Jed, as an example. The local fisher, accustomed to much of Gala water where he has what we call, a clear cast (an unhampered throw), would be rather puzzled when fishing some of the well-wooded parts of the Jed, especially in windy weather, say about Ferniehurst, when the trees are

A WOODLAND WATER.

"With branches bending to the breeze
Whiles trout are hooked—and, whiles, the trees."

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waving hither and thither, above, in front, and behind the angler, as he wades, rod in hand, up the water, casting as he goes.

It is easy to say, "He is a duffer if he finds trees trouble him seriously."

What, my friend! even if he never saw till now, a tree or bush worth speaking of, on the waters he is familiar with?

If the angler's only, or even chief aim, was to avoid trees and bushes, I quite see the force of the remark. If, however, he is put on his mettle; as, for instance, when fishing a friendly match with an old friend who is well used to woodland waters, he would have something else to think of. In fact, he would have to exert all his energies and wits towards the making up of a presentable basket of trout; and in the haste to get rich (in trout) a man is very apt to be off his guard, as when he sees a good trout rising in front of him: and he will get his fly into a branch or twig behind him, ere he knows of its existence.

In a calm day it is easier.

I repeat that there are waters *and* waters. Take yet another case. How different are the methods by which the sluggish canal-like part of any Scottish "water" is attacked by the expert; especially where neither

bushes nor trees line the banks, and where the angler has therefore got a clear cast. Here it is all plain sailing to the man who knows what he is about, and who, of course, fishes up-stream instead of down, with the artificial fly.

As the main object of any book such as this is to teach others who are as yet learners, I fear that I must become egotistical and adopt the personal pronoun I for simplicity. There are a few general precepts which I desire to impress upon beginners, and the first is this:—

(1) Begin with a rod which does not unduly tire your wrist. In due course you can increase the length of your rod, and its weight. If you start with a heavy rod, you run the risk of getting into a slovenly manner of throwing the line. You can never hope to strike delicately or quickly, if your hand is over-weighted. Now, as one man has the wrist and fore-arm of an athlete, and another is deficient in physical fitness, it is impossible to lay down any hard and fast rules regarding the proper length and weight of a rod for the beginner. Besides which, this will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter on rods, etc.

The next precept is this: Use a short

line at first, and let your effort always be to throw a "clean line," however short. Never be tempted to throw a long line, till you can throw a short one, easily and perfectly.

My next piece of advice is: do not try to advance too rapidly. Your aim should be to perfect yourself in any one stage, before you begin to enter upon another. If I can impress this upon the mind of a beginner, he will be benefited greatly in the long run. The Italians have a wonderful proverb, the English of which I prefer to give, especially as I don't know another word of Italian, "Hasten slowly" * (*Festina lente*). This advice, to any one commencing fly-fishing in earnest, is golden. Begin with a casting-line (or collar) of fine whole gut, and learn to throw a clean, straight line. When you have satisfied yourself that you have mastered this, the first step; then, and not till then, try to use drawn-gut, beginning with the heavier grades, and gradually, but slowly, getting into the finer sizes. Things are often proved by their opposites. Reverse this order, and what happens? The beginner, finding that

* "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."
Romeo and Juliet, Act ii. Scene 7.

he makes a hash of it, either gets disappointed, or else gets into bad, *i.e.* slovenly habits. In order to acquire confidence in this, as in all other things, progress should proceed on slow and deliberate lines. Ever before my mind is the desire to render a service to the willing learner; and I wish to emphasize this fact. The expert who has experience, knowledge, and skill, if he be not ungenerous (and few good anglers are captious and ungenerous critics, ready to lay hold on trivialities in any work like this), will understand me when I say that, perchance, even he may, in spite of his experience, find something which he may think worthy of a mental note; but I do not presume to teach the expert. The keen aspirant who really desires, as I myself did at one time, to learn anything which may assist him to become a good and practical wet-fly fisherman, will, I hope, gain some useful hints from these pages. A more earnest teacher, I can assure him, there can hardly be. A more ardent and enthusiastic fly-fisherman than I was for nearly fifty years I can scarcely imagine. Recently, rheumatism has interfered with my beloved recreation, without decreasing my desire to forward in any way within my power, the

interests of brother fly-fishers, and particularly of those who are not above taking a few hints from an old hand.

Before proceeding further, I must refer to the classification of streams into burns, waters, and rivers.

This classification is good only so far as it goes. It enables anglers, and also writers on wet-fly fishing, to lay down, if not fixed rules, at least general principles for the more or less precise methods employed by our school, in attacking streams of such varied width and volume; but the reader will bear with me when I point out that, in point of volume, etc., "a water" is at first a mere burn, and a river is all three, in the various stages of its growth. So that, when the angler fishes the top waters of a river, he fishes as he would in "a burn." Further down, he regards it as "a water," and eventually (an' he be wise) he will fish the lower reaches on the broad principles laid down in a subsequent chapter, "The Fly-fishing of Rivers."

I mean just this: that the mere name is of no real moment, save, inasmuch, as it enables us to classify streams in such a way as to render tuition more intelligible and interesting. Description in all cases is

simplified, and we gain thereby, whether teaching or not.

To all intents and purposes, the middle and upper waters of the parent river (take the Tweed as an example) are to us, as anglers, quite as much "waters" as are any of the delightful tributary streams bearing that title, which flow directly into the parent river itself, but which never become rivers in themselves. Thus it follows that, when we fish, say the Tweed, we must attack that noble river according to the rules laid down in this book—elastic rules, I admit. If we bear in mind that the Tweed is a hundred miles in length, it is quite evident that, near its source at Tweedsmuir, it is only a burn, or rather a network of burns. Further down it bears the character of a water, and naturally must be fished as "a water" accordingly, and so on.

Imagine the case of a man who had lived all his life at Tweedsmuir only fishing these delightful burns, getting suddenly translated to the Tweed from St. Boswells downwards, when his habits were formed. How would the tactics which filled his creel at Tweedsmuir, do, when adapted to the Tweed at St. Boswells? and even more

so must it be, below Kelso Bridge, after the Teviot has added its waters.

When attacking any considerable stretch, in a small river—the characteristics of which are *not* those of a typical Scottish water, with its constant change of stream and pool—wading may not only be difficult and dangerous, but even impossible at times. The fly-fisher will then be unable to conceal his figure save by crouching, crawling, and, in every way possible, concealing himself. In fact, he must "stoop to conquer" literally.

Experienced fishermen must have observed how trout seem to tolerate the presence of four-footed animals, horses, cattle, and sheep, so long as they go browsing about quietly. Let them take to galloping along the river bank; then, if you like, the trout begin to show alarm. The bearing of this upon fishing is obvious. First of all, he who can endure the strain of crouching, and who goes about his business quietly, is most likely to succeed in stalking the old stagers.

As to wading itself, let me say, once for all, that any man who can wade in a river, or a water which can be waded with anything like comfort and safety, must surely

be deficient in wisdom and knowledge if he will not enter the water. The advantages are so enormous. But here, where wading is impracticable, you must just try to hide your figure all you can. Stalk the trout. Whatever you do, do not take *them* cheaply. Somehow, nay, anyhow, keep out of sight, since you may not and cannot wade. "On thy belly shalt thou go." Yes, imitate the snake, if you desire to possess the wisdom of the serpent.

I need scarcely add, that clothing should not be conspicuous. An elastic tweed of a neutral colour is all that is required. Let ease supersede elegance. Stout lacing boots, with a few good hob-nails, and a pair of good leggings to finish up with, are all that any man needs in fishing a sluggish water like this. I may add that, crawling about in wading stockings is very fatiguing work, as well as injurious to the waterproof material itself.

The angler will often need to throw a long line, but when a trout rises at his fly, his wrist must be firm and ready to respond in a moment. When no trout are observed feeding on the surface, experience leads me to regard such long stretches of dead water, in any Scottish river of medium size, as very

uncertain, and the deeper the water the more likely to be uncertain, are these long, still, deep reaches. The reason is not quite so obvious. There are many such problems to be solved by the wet-fly fisherman. I presume that in deep dead water, if there happens to be at the time an absence of the natural fly, the trout, when hungry, go down to grub at the bottom, and in fact are apt to become bottom feeders. Yet, should a few flies be shaken off any overhanging trees or bushes, it is astonishing how quickly the trout find them out. Therefore, while there is no sign of the natural insect—and as a consequence no rise in the surface—you must learn to use your flies as (more or less) sunk flies, always contriving to impart to them, cunningly, an appearance of vitality which can only be done by a slight but deft movement of the rod hand, the flies being thrown up and across the pool, and then worked, but slightly, towards you. You must "strike" when the line stops, or when you see the surface break, in a rise. But, the moment you observe the trout "are rising," you must cease to sink your fly. When trout are really rising keenly, when in fact, the rise has fairly developed, you can hardly

keep your flies too near the surface, or cast too often.

The wet-fly fisherman who, under such circumstances, still continues to sink his flies (and many do), forgets that his flies may actually be passing underneath the trout he is trying to lure, and nothing can be more absurd! Rapid casting with as short a line as can reach the trout, is the game to play in sluggish or dead water, when trout are fairly "on the hop," and indeed almost anywhere else. There are times when the man who can fish the dry fly as well as the wet, scores; especially in sluggish waters, or portions of waters.

I confess that I do not love to fish small and still rivers which are so uncertain, and where it is either a feast or a famine. For, as it is less frequently the case, that in these slow running, deep and narrow rivers, trout are rising well; when you do so find them, you should be able "to score." To this end you must work hard, your rod never idle for a second.

It is quite a pleasure to me to leave behind the fly-fishing of *sluggish* Scottish waters (or parts of waters), and to enter upon the fishing of any really typical Scottish water, with the wet fly. How

A TYPICAL SCOTTISH WATER.
Where pool and stream are shaking hands.

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charming is the variation of pool and stream, of deep and shallow, and how interesting the varied methods which are called into play consequently. The learner will now begin by wading gently into the thin side of a pool; making his flies search the likely looking portion above him, where pool and stream begin to shake hands. It is morning; but no rising trout are dimpling the surface as yet. The day is mild, the breeze gentle. It is blowing up stream; the sky is grey, and thus the indications are favourable to a good day's sport. Having put up your rod, your gut casting line (with its two or three well-chosen flies, meanwhile having been stretched), is left to soak, in a shallow, with a stone placed over it, to prevent accidents. The gut casting-line being now pliant and soft, must always be straightened before it is fixed to the reel line. These minor details must be rigidly observed. Your tactics must be those of the wet fly, but must not be overdone. If there is an eddy, search that, the one at your own side for choice, first. Here, remember that the fly is, at times, being actually carried from you, not towards you. So, humour your line accordingly, by allowing the fly as much as possible, to float from

you, rather than dragging it towards you. This is much easier said than done, and, I am free to confess, that if there is one thing I am never quite at home at, as a fly-fisher, it is this very fishing of eddies. Many a good trout lies therein, which owes its existence to the fact that, just as he is about to rise to the artificial fly, the angler raises his hand a moment too soon; or else, a puff of wind perchance hurries the fly off, at the critical moment, and that trout subsides, to moralize on his lucky escape.

No two eddies are alike in strength or depth, and thus it happens that he is a clever fly-fisherman, who, with the wet fly, can satisfy himself that he fishes the eddies scientifically (*i.e.* accurately), methodically, and well. It is, in my opinion, not a very common attainment.

And now fish the centre current, moving up gradually, till you near the rapid, or rapids, descending from the pool or stream above. All such rapids must be fished up, and the line should be short, especially if the angler is wading in fairly deep water, and below the trout, of course. Throw *up*, with a quick, direct, forcible cast, and then, lower the point of the rod, so that, when

the line is thrown, your rod points up the stream, and is quite close to the surface of the river; rod and line, for one brief second, forming one unbroken extension pointing directly up stream. In this way—and in this alone—you command your fly from the moment it alights; and you will find that, even then, you have to raise the point of your rod overhead, or sideways, with considerable rapidity, as your flies often come towards you, at a great pace. And, here, it is necessary to dwell a little on the proper fishing up-stream of any rapid like this. One throw is no real test. You must throw again and again, the oftener the better, in a given time; four, five, or six rapid casts with a short line, and then, if you like, try the water on either side. But remember, when fishing a narrow "throat" up, if the fly halts for a moment, look out; for it means a trout, and you must tighten on him instantly, and pull him down stream gently—if you can do so.

My friend "The Amateur Angler," does not believe in a very quick "strike" down stream, judging from his latest delightful work, which I had the honour of reviewing in the *Fishing Gazette* of 13th December, 1902, "Dove Dale Revisited, with other

Holiday Sketches;" but there, we cannot all think the same; and in the case of a wet-fly fished up-stream, the "pull" (or stoppage of the line), means that the trout has the fly in his mouth already, and to delay to put the hook home, must surely be folly, then. A shy trout often makes a noisy, frightened "boil" at an artificial fly, and this has given rise, I imagine, to the notion of a trout drowning a fly with its tail, in order to pick it up, afterwards. Could that trick be verified, it would surely be a proof that certain trout decline to take an artificial fly till they have examined it leisurely—from under the water—than which theory, what could be more ridiculous?

It reminds me of nothing so much—this tempest in a tea-pot, this ridiculously obtrusive and fussy rise of a timid trout at a small fly, with a sting in his tail—of nothing, I repeat, so much as the spectacle of a young and charming but timid and shortsighted lady, charging across a busy London street, to greet a brother or husband whom she is anxious to see—only to find out, at the last moment, that he is a stranger. The sudden halt to so much momentum; the revulsion of feeling, from joy to fear, and the confusion consequent,

all taking place in one brief second, surely furnish a picturesque parallel. Lord Byron's lines on the blooming and blushing schoolgirl arise to my mind, and seem not inappropriate.

"So much alarmed, that she is quite alarming."

But the trout, which has stopped your wet fly in strong water, makes no such rise, and must be hooked before he has had time to eject your lure. Hence the need of a short line, and of a ready and responsive hand.

In the few lines which I have given to that small but good handbook, "How to catch Trout," mention was made of "that piece of water just above where a stream breaks," and so forth.

This is a favourite place with me, as with the Three Anglers who wrote that book.

Just where the waters of a pool, or gentle stream, begin to be sucked down into the rapids below, there is often a portion, smooth-surfaced but not very slow-running, called the "hang," where the waters seem to pause ere they make their plunge below; and here (especially if a breeze ruffles the surface) some good trout should be picked up.

And now, suppose that you have fished the "hang," and have waded ashore, and that before you lies a long stretch of uniformly thin water, flowing over gravel and sand, smooth of surface and gentle of flow, how would you fish this characterless piece of water? Well, for my own part, if there is a sharp bend here, I take the shortest possible cut to the next good place, keeping well away from the bank so as not to drive the scared trout in front of me, only to terrify others.

Beginners often spoil a day's fishing by wasting time over such places. *There is quite as much in this knowledge as in knowing the right fly*; nay, without this intuition, good flies will never make you a breaker of records, on a Scottish, or North of England water.

Why do I skip such places? My reasons are many! They are so shallow that you generally scare the trout ere you come near them. Then the trout generally run small; two good reasons, I think. I fear I may seem to be inconsistent. I have just said that long reaches of deep and sluggish water are uncertain, and I say so still, for it is my experience. When fish take in them, they often take well, but an

average day's fishing in such water is, I think, disappointing.

And now I am declaring my dislike for long reaches of thin pools, without cover for the trout or the fisherman; and I repeat, that to pass these over is often good policy.

I am not speaking of them in times of flood, for then I might write somewhat differently; but in a clear water of normal volume, I generally go over these places at a gallop. And yet, I love to fish *good* pools in such a small river, with a nice wind curling the surface as it meets the flow of the stream.

A pool of moderate depth, which you can wade from your own side, with bushes and high banks on the further side, is another matter. Again, a pool, deep in the centre, getting thinner at the further side and flowing over layers of trap rock. What old fisherman but expects, as I do, the prospect of some infinitely pretty fly-fishing in such a pool as that! Even when trout are not rising at the natural fly, in these shallows close to the edge of the deeps, throw up and across; then turn the point of your rod down stream slightly, ready if you see a rise, or even if your fly is stopped, for then it is your own fault if you do not twitch

your fly past the barb into a fish. Many and many a trout have I thus taken.

When an overhanging tree has to be avoided, with a side cast, how much it adds to one's pleasure, to hook some good trout which hitherto has reigned there unscathed.

In any such pool as that which I have tried to describe, how should you fish? Well, broadly, I think, on these lines. You can try your own side first, and cast across rapidly; but, when you come to fish the further side, try to cast up and partly across. Let your tail fly come as near to the further bank as is compatible with safety. In some angling works, you will be told to allow your fly to land on the further bank, and then to gently draw it off, as it will then fall upon the water as softly as thistle-down.

This is beautiful in theory, but it must be swallowed with a large grain of the salt of common sense. If the grass is newly cut, or cropped short, good; but to attempt these tactics where a tangle of long grass and heather, bramble and bushes twisted together line the bank, would be folly. Wherever it is safe to do so, the fly can hardly be thrown too near the further bank.

That very practical professional fisherman, Adam Dryden, goes too far in his sweeping condemnation of the pools, when he says, "Anglers think that a deep pool is the place in which they are sure to find trout. This is a mistake; you ought to fish twenty or thirty yards above or below the pool, for any fish which may be in it it is almost impossible to take."

There is a substratum of truth in these remarks.

We must always sift out the wheat and reject the chaff, when weighing statements such as these. One would think, to read the lines I have quoted, that all Dryden's pools were of a certain well-defined character—and all practically worthless to the fly-fisherman—and that the waters above and below such pools were of a more or less uniform character: one of excellence, of course.

He does not mean anything so sweeping. Much of the solid truth, in such a small book, the thinking reader will find *between the lines.*

Next, let us consider how to tackle reaches of moderately deep water, flowing amongst rocks and boulders, and, in fact, broken water. The wading is often

execrable; but good trout are to be had, and it is exciting work too. Behind each boulder, or rock, there is generally a bit of calm water which must be fished with care and skill; also the runs between rocks must be fished up, casting frequently, and in the manner already described; and all eddies searched thoroughly. But there is one thing I must repeat: never use a long line in such places if you can avoid it, else you will be smashed up now and again, especially if you hook a large trout, and he bolts amongst the boulders. I remember such a place, and (in a high wind) how often I came to grief. The wind was the chief cause that day, for its weight upon the rod prevented me from being able to "feel" or control a large trout; the power and weight of the wind on my rod, being the greater of the two forces, by far. To fish good broken water, makes a pleasant change on a suitable day, for it is often full of trout, and if it gets a fair chance at all will "fish" well. It requires a man to be active, and is therefore the very place for the young aspirant, who rather likes hard work, and does not mind a possible spill, whilst wading after an obstreperous and large trout, doing his divilmost to foul the

line, across some one of the many boulders which often strew the stream, in such a piece of broken water as I am thinking of now, in the wild Cabrach of the Deveron, Aberdeenshire.

The man who believes in, and sticks to, his "fine and far off"; when fishing any rapid Scottish water up stream must necessarily get his reel-line drowned frequently, and when this happens, he loses that touch, that direct control, which to my mind is so all-important; and with the result, that, many a good trout which he ought to basket, goes to add to the numbers of the knowing ones, which are hook-shy from experiences like these. Broken water, *which is shallow*, and devoid of these deep little pits, where the trout can rest, is useless to the fly-fisher.

A short line enables the man who is tackling these broken bits of water to cast frequently, and to be in touch with a rising trout instantly. The learner may ask, what sort of man would I back as an all-round wet-fly fisher on any typical Scottish water? What, if I put first, the man who knows every stone in the river? All other things being equal, he has the advantage, surely, over any stranger to the district. Wet-fly

fishermen frequently develop remarkable intuitive powers, combined with rapid decision, and he must therefore possess these two characteristics. Then he must be an enthusiast, since enthusiasm engenders energy. And, as in the more serious affairs of life; there is a close affinity between the industry and the success of the angler.

Think of the man who smokes and dreams away the hours, when he should be fishing.

To quote an old Yorkshire worthy's maxim, "The fly that is allus in the water and never on the bank." It may not be a very famous fly, but I'll back it against any number of more orthodox flies, which are fished less assiduously and persistently. "It is dogged as does it" in most things; and without dogged perseverance I cannot promise any learner success as a wet-fly fisherman. Moreover, he must learn when to cast a long line, and when a short one; when to let the line "dwell," even for a short time, and when to repeat his casts with rapid frequency. He must be in touch with his flies always, and know exactly when to strike, and how. He must so utilize his day as never to be found wasting

its precious hours fishing unlikely and unproductive stretches of water, and he must work hard, whenever the trout are in a rising mood. He must know intuitively (but also by study and observation) the most likely places in which to meet with success—wind, season, weather, sky, and condition of water all being considered; he should know the best points of a fly, and all the better, if he can dress his own flies. He must be able to cast well, and to use, with confidence, even the finest drawn gut. Knots of all kinds must be as an open book to him, else he is, at best, but a helpless sort of fisherman. It has always staggered me that there really exist quite "old hands," who hardly know how to make up a collar (gut casting-line), or how to put on a dropper neatly; and so, all round, I affirm that a man who takes up wet-fly fishing seriously (and it is not worth taking up at all, unless it is taken up thus), should learn to be independent of others; that, go where he may, he will be able to paddle his own canoe. I preach what I practised in youth. I could, and I did, tie my own flies, and I have never seen any flies which killed better than my own simple flies did. If my rod broke I could splice it and go

on fishing. I used to delight in making up my own tackle. To repair my own waders was no great trouble, nor was it difficult to add fresh tackets (hobnails) to my wading boots. "*Can do* is easily carried about," says an old Scottish proverb, which proverb I think has a decided application when considering fully the make-up of a good wet-fly fisherman.

But there is one thing which the wet-fly fisher must *not* be, still less he who ventures to write upon that most interesting of subjects. He must not be *too* clever, nor too dogmatic, else Humpty Dumpty's fate threatens him. For myself, when I look forward to being overhauled by the critics—I hope that when I am slated it will be by a man who can wield the rod quite as well as he does the pen. Now and then the feeling that comes over me as I write, takes a humorous turn, such as Baron Munchausen puts into the mouth of the Coon he has begun to fire at, with his unerring aim.

"Oh, all right! You needn't fire. I'll come down!" said the Coon.

There is one thing which he must most emphatically be, none the less. He must be practical; he must take a broad and

comprehensive view of his situations, and take it promptly, too, if he would be classed A1. This seems, perhaps, "tall talk." Let me explain what I mean: by two examples, thus—

A. has procured all the best rods, reels, and tackle procurable, and he can throw a beautiful line; and yet, as a wet-fly fisher on Scottish waters, he is not a success; indeed, he is far from that. Why? The reasons may be many or few. Indeed, there may only be one—namely he lacks "gumption," truly a Scottish phrase—but oh, the depth of it! What use to him are all his fine flies, or his fine casting, if he simply is "a potterer," and *an aimless potterer forbye* who, when he goes out to fish, has no more grasp of his subject, than an average Poll-parrot has of the alphabet? Such men will stand for half a day, over one or two small pools, throwing the most beautifully dressed of flies in the most skilful and approved manner, and feeling (as they invariably do) that if they cannot and do not kill trout, the trout cannot be taken by any one. "Vain, vain pursuit; toil without 'troot." That is the way how not to do it. Now, B. has half A.'s paraphernalia; but he has twice his wits, and

three times his gumption; for B. takes a comprehensive grasp of any day's fishing which lies in front of him, and argues it out thus to himself. "Water just right; wind up-stream, also right! Sky grey and temperature mild—good! I must make a basket to-day; and I *shall* too! Let me see. Where shall I fish? The best places are good enough for me. Let the others fish where they like. Then, I know the best flies. Bother luncheon! a sandwich whilst I fish; no time for more; and now I'm engaged till the evening."

Then, in he wades; his situation grasped clearly beforehand. Would not I back such a man to win, even if he did not throw a very fine line?

In the fishing of large rivers, this is not the case, to anything like the same extent. But I am dealing with "waters;" and if anything shows the need of dealing with the fishing of "waters," as entirely separate from "rivers," surely this brings the matter home.

At the risk of repetition, there are a few things which I deem worth placing on record, before I conclude the subject of "waters."

1. It is better, if you have the choice, to fish any typical "water" when it is fairly

full. I hate a muddy river, personally; but, at times, big things are done when it is porter-coloured, fining off into claret-coloured. For my own part, I prefer fishing an absolutely clear "water" or "river." In a prolonged drought (to take the opposite extreme), trout seldom take the fly well, from a variety of reasons which it would take time to enumerate; the fact remains.

2. My own favourite sky is one too seldom met with; one wherein the clouds are very high, termed by Scottish anglers "a grey day." In very cold weather (especially in the early spring) a little genial sunshine "a blinky day" is often very advisable; and sometimes at that early season a sunny morning, ending by a cloudy afternoon, proves propitious, for obvious reasons.

3. Personally, I prefer a wind which meets the current of the river or "water."

In the first place, especially where the water flows through any gorge, or narrow valley, when the wind is blowing directly down stream, the amount of wind required to make a really good ripple is often very considerable; so considerable indeed, that a man who uses fine-drawn gut, has hard work before him, if he wishes to fish

up stream all day. And, at times, he is beaten from fatigue. Now, a comparatively moderate wind, when blowing up stream, suffices to make a very pretty ripple on the surface, a ripple better in every way. First, there is an absence of the fatigue consequent upon fishing a whole day against the wind, and, as one can fish with twice the accuracy, precision, and delicacy, the results are usually satisfactory to the angler.

4. I have spoken already of wading, and I repeat that it is well to wade, where wading is fairly easy and safe; but, in the language of Shakespeare, remember this of wading—"It is well to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it as a giant."

I mean this: "waders" give you the "giant's strength," since a wet-fly fisherman, without his waders, is seldom very successful. Only do not wade "tyrannically." It is a common experience to find men wading where they ought to be fishing. And now comes a suggestion which may possibly be worth consideration.

If the angler is fishing open water, and, if his comrade is likely to fish the same stretch of river, yea, or even "the stranger at the gates," soon afterwards; it

is scarcely the thing to go rushing deeply into the pools, and streams, with wading *trousers* on; scattering the trout in all directions. Certainly the man who follows hard upon the heels of such an angler, has not got much chance. Therefore, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so, do not unduly disturb the best parts of any "water," by wading furiously through them. Think of the angler, who is almost certain to follow you, as well as of your own sport.

5. Again, never allow yourself to get into the timid habit of playing each individual trout (of any size) as if you had got hold of a salmon. Even with fine-drawn gut, after the first few wild bursts, the safest plan is to play your trout with a firm and steady pressure. To let the trout have it all his own way, is too laughable, and no man can hope ever to make big baskets of trout, who cannot kill his fish quickly. Especially is this important when trout are rising keenly at the natural flies, the time of the "take," as it is often called.

6. The early spring, as a rule, yields the best fly-fishing in our Scottish waters. In some small Scottish rivers, fly-fishing falls off a little from the 1st to the 15th of May; whereas in others (fewer by far) it does not

really begin, till about May-day. Much depends upon the elevation above the sea. The sources of the river, also have a considerable effect on the earliness or lateness of any individual trout stream; for a river which issues from a chain of lochs, deep and cold, is bound to be a later stream, than one which never passes through any such lochs. The action of the sun upon the shallows, is bound to raise the mean temperature of any river, or water; just as, once raised in this way, the temperature is bound to be lowered if, on its way, it has to flow into and then out of, any long, deep, and cold Highland loch, in which its waters are practically lost. For, doubtless, many of these Highland lochs are partly fed by deep hidden springs of crystal-clear but ice-cold water.

Other causes are self-evident, namely, where, from the height of the mountains near its source, the snow lies late; as also the way in which it remains buried in deep corries, seldom reached by the sun's rays. Melting snow always lowers the temperature of a river, and thus retards the "seasons" in any trout stream, under its baleful influence.

Who would think of comparing one of

our South of Scotland "waters," flowing through a rich and open agricultural district, to a Highland stream, such as I have spoken of already, flowing for many miles amongst lofty mountains, with a daily minimum of sunshine, as a direct consequence?

So much for a few harmless theories as to the possible causes of the early or late characteristics of various streams in Scotland. I may add that, certain streams which lie much further north than others, yield earlier trouting with the fly, so it is not an uninteresting subject to work out, which I am in no way attempting to do, herein.

In my first contribution to the pages of the *Fishing Gazette*, entitled "North Country Fly-Fishing," I told how, when fishing the Isla above Glenisla, Forfarshire, in the month of May, I once had an experience, possessing certain features which gave an added charm—the charm which comes from getting out of the ordinary beaten track. The Isla there is of the size of "a water," and it was unusually low at the time.

I had fished a certain "hole" or pool which was bounded on the farther side by rocks, into which the stream from above rushed at a right angle, causing, in flood

time, a burrowing-out of the pool, or hole, and hurling the gravel and sand into a considerable heap, on my own side. It was difficult to wade, and unsafe. In fact, it gave one the idea of wading on the rather friable edge of a submerged, but narrow gravel-pit. And I had at last to leave the water, for the wading got worse as I moved upwards. When, at length, I stood on the dry gravel-bed (from which I fancy the local anglers fished the place) I "put down" all the trout. This hint set me on my mettle. Crawling up for a few yards to the edge of the deep eddy on my own side, where the gravel-bed went sheer down into the blue depths of the pool, I sat down on the gravel itself, allowing my legs to dangle in the eddy; and then, having arranged landing net and basket, convenient to my hand, I waited, Micawber-like, for something to turn up, keeping perfectly still the while.

Presently I observed one or two trout rising near to the part where the stream rushed against the rocky wall of the opposite side. Now, it happened that the stream just above the pool was useless, because of trees and bushes, and also because it was a thin and quite characterless bit of water for

the fly-fisher. Gusts of wind from time to time, however, shook out showers of small flies from the foliage, and these got rapidly carried down into this deep but narrow pool.

The trout were always on the look-out, ever waiting in one or other of the eddies, and even in the rough water itself, for their expected manna. I took in the situation at a glance, and saw that my chance had come, if I could but use it skilfully. Letting out a little line, and remembering that I had trees in dangerous proximity close behind me, I switched the line right into the wind's eye. In the neck of the stream a trout showed, and was promptly hooked. Gently but firmly I drew that trout towards my landing net, from which I transferred him to my basket. There was no fuss; and let me remark that if one only keeps still, and above all, if one avoids standing up, the shyest trout will recommence rising, and at no great distance from the fisherman; especially if the angler (as I presume he does) places himself below his quarry, and throws up to him.

Yes, I can still recall with the greatest delight, the hours I spent sitting on that gravel-bed, with my legs (in wading stockings) pendant in the water. Now and then

a trout would rise in the centre current itself. At once my flies were thrown upward, and allowed to sail down for one or two yards, and the cast was repeated, till at last my reel sang out its merry music. In time the trout got disturbed by the noisy and rude plunges of their brethren, led captive through their midst. To meet the situation I crawled yet a little higher up stream, and again sat down, as before. The only trout now visibly on the feed, were in the eddy beyond the centre current, and in the calm water even beyond that. Here it was necessary to raise high in air my rod-hand, so as to keep the reel-line from even *touching* the rapid centre current. I always managed to secure a goodly number of trout in this way, and no prettier bit of fishing do I ever remember having, in my life.

Again, just below this deep pool was a shallow one, overhung by trees, to reach which I had to wriggle down on my side as best I could. Lying flat, I then had to cast underneath the overhanging boughs. So few locals ventured to fish this place, that I managed always to secure some good trout. When, at length, I saw that this thin water was not going to yield me any

more sport on that day, I stood up, and oh, what a commotion I caused.

In 1886 I wrote an essay which was printed in the *Fishing Gazette*, and entitled "Fishing for Trout with the Wet Fly." I quote from the lines with which I concluded. "The fishing of small tributary streams ('waters') with the wet fly, embraces all the best principles of fishing up stream."

"Never fish down, is my rule, on any small 'water,' if the wind permits you to fish up; which it does not always do. Keep out of sight, by wading below the fish, by taking advantage of bushes, etc., by going on your knees, and so forth; and fish up, fish up, casting incessantly, using such a rod as you can easily manage."

Previously I have remarked on the folly of allowing a good trout of 1 lb. or even of 1½ lb. to run as long as you would a salmon. The learner must not mistake my meaning; he must allow a trout his first or second wild bursts, when he should be "in hand." Then a steady strain on the rod will prevent his breathing easily, and you will soon find him giving in—when the landing-net should be slipped under him, without delay.

One sees anglers who never seem to collar a good trout lest it might escape.

This becomes a disastrous habit, since one may lose the best part of the day, playing a few decent-sized trout.

What if a trout does get off? When trout are rising freely, you should soon be on terms with another. Learn to make hay while it is sunny; don't dawdle—and "collar" the trout boldly.

When trout are not "rising," then, and then only, can I sympathize with the angler who plays an extra good-sized trout with unusual caution, since time really is of little relative value, when trout are not really on the rise. Let me hurl the words of the Poet at the over-cautious, or timid, trout fishermen.

> "He either fears his fate too much
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all."

I have not spoken of flies, and I shall only say here that, for all practical purposes, wingless flies, called "spiders" in Scotland, and hackled flies in England, are the most suitable for the fishing of "waters." When I come to the subject of "flies," I shall then enumerate a few general favourites of my own, and of others.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FISHING OF RIVERS WITH THE WET FLY.

THIS is something like a subject, nor can it ever be a dry one. Had I fished but one or two rivers, I fancy that I could have entered on the topic with a lighter heart, and a clearer mind. As it is, I seem to have had such varied experiences (in the various rivers I have fished), that I find it somewhat puzzling how to condense into one chapter all my thoughts and opinions.

At best, I am only giving my opinion, however strongly I may choose to express it. My neighbour may think differently, and, he has a perfect right to do so. It is quite surprising how, in life, apparently diverse methods, bring about very similar results.

And it is even so in the filling of the angler's creel.

Perhaps each man does not make an equally heavy basket; but the little

differences which often take pages of printed matter to ventilate, go for very little indeed, in actual practice.

Hard work, intelligent interest, enthusiasm, observation, manual and digital dexterity, solid common-sense—not least, though last named—these are the things which make the successful fly-fisherman.

As I have written pretty fully of the methods recommended for the proper fishing of Scottish tributary streams, *i.e.* "waters," I hope I may be forgiven if I, at times, seem to repeat myself; for, of course, a "river" being only a big edition of a "water" (sometimes its own former self, when young and half-grown), it is impossible to get away from the fact that in many points our methods possess a similarity.

In some important details, however, there is a *marked dissimilarity* between the methods employed by the wet-fly fisherman, when fishing "waters" and "rivers"; so, having endeavoured to enumerate my methods in the one, I shall now do my best to describe my own method as a wet-fly fisherman, in the other class—parent-rivers, in fact.

I think I may say, that the larger the

river (provided it is fished while the angler wades), the wider is the difference.

As in waters, so in rivers. They are not all alike, even the upper reaches of a river are often most unlike the lower reaches. In some of the rivers which I have fished, I have noticed a sudden and sharp line of demarcation, between the character of one or two miles of water above a given point, and the waters immediately below. I remember, though it is an age since I saw it, that the river Dochart in Perthshire, at one part of its course, suddenly ceases to run in alternate stream and pool, and flows sluggishly for some distance. In the same county, the Tummel, at part of its course, suddenly changes its character entirely. Both of these rivers in time resume the rapid character of normal Highland rivers.

The Isla, just below Meigle, gives one the idea of a sluggish river, whereas just below and above Glenisla, it is a typical Scottish "water" in character. Is it to be supposed that the methods which are the rule on a rapid river are equally correct on a sluggish one, or even on a mile or two of sluggish water running narrow and deep between high clay banks, where wading is seldom possible? I say no!

I used to fish, and fish with success, two miles of the river Tummel; but had I been compelled by circumstances to fish the mile or two immediately below the boundary, would I have done equally well? Would I have had, as I had for many years, the highest average on that well-fished stretch of river?

With a conviction that I am simply stating a plain fact in plain English, I declare that I should have been nowhere. I had one or two days on that lower water, and I saw so few trout rising, and I did so little execution, that I avoided it ever afterwards, even when I had permission offered me. And yet it was not one-tenth so much fished as the water above.

It is such problems that trouble me, when writing a book, for are they not parts of the same river? They, nevertheless, must be attacked by methods which are in many essential features, widely different. I remember some parts of the Coquet, which likewise ran sluggishly between high banks, whilst an adjoining stretch was very different. It is, indeed, true of many "waters" and "rivers." And my decided opinion is, that, whenever the angler finds a river of moderate dimensions—and yet too large to

be classed as a "water"—suddenly altering its character and beginning to flow (no longer in alternate pool and stream and in alternate deep and shallow, but narrow, deep, and sluggish, with overhanging clay banks, burrowed out by the winter's floods), there will the wet-fly fisherman find that he has got to exercise the virtue of patience; for such stretches are as uncertain as an April day. Whereas, in a typical Scottish river, when trout are not rising in the deep places, we can always fish the shallower portions, and with sometimes very considerable results too.

Being a wet-fly fisherman, I therefore plump for a river such as these I have generally succeeded best in—the Tweed, Teviot, Tummel, Deveron, Cumberland Eden, and several others. In all the three last mentioned I have had excellent sport. The free waters of the Tweed and Teviot of late years have been so over-fished, that I have generally gone further a-field for my annual fishing trip (from Brighton).

Of course I have fished other rivers—for one, the Ribble, near Chatburn, with my late brother; but so long ago now, that I remember very little of it. I have fished the Don—the last time in 1864—the Tay

from Aberfeldy, the Ness at Inverness, and last and not least, the Navar, that noted salmon river, where the only good trout fishing with the wet fly, seems to be just above "No. 1," near to the loch out of which it flows. Sometimes very pretty sport indeed, is to be had there. Lastly, I have fished the Wutach from Bad Boll, but I was only recovering from an illness, and thus was not able to endure much fatigue during my ten days' stay there. However, I saw sufficient to know that there was an abundance of good water and any amount of trout, and I had some excellent sport. I wish I had exploited the lower reaches, as I have since heard of sport which simply made my mouth water, both as regards the average size of trout taken and their numbers. I can vouch for it that my information is from a reliable source. As the volume of a stream largely influences the methods of the wet-fly fisherman, so that the subject of fishing "waters" needs a separate chapter as distinct from parent rivers, the same unwritten law manifestly influences the fisherman when dealing with rivers proper, according as they are under the influence—I had nearly written the spell—of flood or of drought.

To illustrate my meaning.

During a low state of the water, a skilful and experienced angler visits, say the Tweed, for the first time, at any point between Melrose and Mertoun.

He spends three weeks fishing daily, and, his holiday over, he returns home, with an absolute brain-photograph of every pool and stream, in the three miles of water he had fished.

He returns, another year. On this occasion, however, the river has just been in flood, and, though all but clear, is brim full. Where are all the pretty little places which he remembered so well? where the gentle flow of some pool or stream, which, with wisdom and skill, he used to fish up, whilst easily wading upward against the gentle current? Where all the pretty little eddies?—the little broken runs? the long, pleasant, and wadable flats? Has the flood swept them all away, or changed their character so? He *will not* believe it. He *will* wade his pet flats *upward*, anyhow, and fish up as he wades.

So he thinks; but he is mistaken. The toil alone would prove too great; nor would it pay him. He must fish the river as he finds it, and his methods must change

to meet the altered conditions of pool, stream, and eddy. If he wants to know how completely changed a river like the Tweed at the points indicated can be, just let him, for instance, try to cross the ford at Dryburgh, which he waded at the same time last year, with comparative ease. But —let him have his life insured first, for the chances are that he will find himself swept off his feet, and sent rolling down "The Boat-hole" into the "Hare Craig pool."

In treating my last subject, "The Fishing of 'Waters' with the Wet Fly," I remarked that I wrote for the learner; that I did not, in fact, presume to teach the expert. But, let it be clearly understood that I meant the word "learner," in a kindly, brotherly, and comprehensive sense. All good fellow-fishermen should belong to that brotherhood; and, as a matter of fact, they do, in all things pertaining to angling; and the position of an angling author is neither more nor less than this: he gives his ideas and his experiences publicity, in the hope that he may possibly render a service to any one who is not above taking a leaf out of his book. I hold that all true anglers are essentially learners, to a greater or less extent. The "learner"

thus includes all eager to benefit, in however small a degree, by the experience and observation of others. Never was any one more ready to take a "tip" from a good practical fisherman than the present writer.

Since there must be and is a difference in one's respective methods, when fishing any average Scottish river when full, and when somewhat low, in what things does the difference consist?

I prefer to start by assuming that the river of our imagination is somewhat low. Now, why do I use this qualifying word "somewhat," and not simply say, is low? For this reason: When a river such as the Tweed, Teviot, Don, Deveron, and so on, is dead low, as during a long drought, a very great and sad change takes place. The streams get choked by vegetable growths, and the stones covered by green slime. Any pollution is intensified, and when you are wading (the last time I fished the Teviot this was the case) large masses of submerged abomination get detached from the bottom, and rise to the surface, a spectacle to howl at. Trout, I fancy, must sicken; anyhow, between sickening, and bottom-feeding on the creeper, caddis, fresh-water shrimp, etc., fly-fishing is

seldom good then. As a matter of fact, practical wet-fly anglers, knowing this fact, generally forsake the artificial fly for other lures. And that is why I say a "somewhat" low state of river, where legitimate fly-fishing is still to be had, and where it is, to the wise and prudent, at its best, as regards the real charm of fishing with the wet fly.

How, then, should one proceed?

If it is very early in the season, and the weather bitterly cold, till the natural fly is seen, you will probably be wise to fish somewhat below the surface.

I do not think I can possibly explain matters better than I did in an essay published (on May 5, 1894) by the *Fishing Gazette*, entitled "The Delights of the Deveron." I shall merely take some extracts from it, such as the following:—

"The morning is cold, and the surface is as yet unbroken by the rise of a trout. I enter the water at once, and begin sinking and very slightly 'working' the fly. I do nothing at first. Presently I get 'a pull,' and my reel sings out its welcome music." This is repeated time after time. "Suddenly, however, a few little fairy-forms appear on the surface. At first they are hardly heeded, so I continue sinking my

fly, and killing a trout every now and again. The apathy of the trout, however, soon gives place to energy, and on all sides the fish keep on making 'head and tail rises' whilst sucking down the flies.

"They no longer lie in mid-water, but quite close to the surface; so, shortening line, and wading well in, I begin to make short, quick casts over each rising fish, within reach, and for a time my hands are full. Trout keep tumbling, tumbling into the basket, in rapid succession. I seldom wade ashore; for, thanks to my method of carrying and using the landing-net mid-stream, such a waste of time is seldom necessary. Now is the time to prove what the angler is made of. Some men take ten minutes to kill a pound trout, and wade ashore for each one of even half a pound.

"It is rank folly.

"The great aim should be to kill and basket as many trout during these golden moments as is possible. Timidity is folly here."

I skip a long passage, and take up the thread of my discourse again thus—

"The rise is all but over. The trout, which have filled their mouths with flies, go down to pouch them. They do not waste

time to swallow each tiny atom, but simply keep filling the mouth as fast as possible, swallowing dozens—nay, hundreds—at a gulp. Some of the flies coming down from above have got submerged. If skilfully and delicately fished, a *sunk* fly will still do execution."

It is an April scene which I have been describing. And now for May.

Let us suppose the date to be the 15th. And now for the rest of that "paper" which is of immediate interest to us.

"There is a still pool; shallow on our side, but deepening near the further bank, where some fine old trees overhang the water. The river is low, and the day cloudy; a nice light wind is just rippling the surface, as it meets the placid current, in its passage up stream. We mount a 'double' midge fly, size of hooks 00, 'Greenwell's Glory,' as the point or tail fly, and for the next, a chaffinch or starling wing, with a light red or coch-y-bonddhu hackle, for 'dropper,' placing the two flies 6 feet apart. When a river is 'dead fine,' I always think that two flies are ample, kept well apart; the size of dropper, No. 1 of Hutchinson's Kendal scale. Wading is now a matter of importance, since a clumsy

RIVER FISHING.
A few casts in the early morning.

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fellow, splashing about, will put down any rising trout."

In a "fine," *i.e.* low, state of river wading must be gone about very circumspectly, especially when fishing pools and thin flats, when the wind is light. I desire to direct attention to what immediately follows. It is no imaginary story, but a reminiscence of one or two delightful days on the Deveron. I do not necessarily rush into the water up to the thigh, when I start fishing a thin flat like this, in low water.

I begin by throwing upwards to the shallow portion on my own side of the "flat," just wetting my feet, and no more, and then, I gradually switch my flies round (short, quick casts) till I have fished half-way across. Gliding quietly in, and allowing no tell-tale wave to go in front of me as I wade, I begin fishing from the middle of the flat; first, directly upwards, and then with that regularity and precision which only comes from long practice, my flies search the water, until at length I am casting close to the opposite bank. Slowly retracing my steps, and moving a few yards further up, I repeat this process, and in this way, very little water worth fishing, escapes my attention.

At other times, I begin at the deep side, working to the shallow on my own side. Without wishing to place too much stress on a purely mechanical plan, I cannot help feeling that it is necessary to give expression to some governing principles connected with the art of fishing thoroughly a pool or a stream in any (Northern) ordinary river, when it is of such volume as to make wading up stream advisable, and fairly easy of accomplishment.

Very large rivers must be proportionately low, especially those which have a rapid fall. A river whose fall is gradual, and whose current is gentle, will naturally permit of up-stream *wading* sooner than the former class of river. I hesitate to use so simple and homely an illustration, but I have none better in my mind. Take, then, the rough plan which I now suggest, from the homely illustration of a wheel with its radiating spokes, before the tire is on. Divide this diagram in the centre. Let the axle, or a little below it, indicate the angler's own position, and the spokes the direction and rough plan of, his upward casts; and, surely, the illustration will be easily grasped by any young fly-fisherman.

Once the general principle of a thing is made thoroughly clear, details fall into their places of themselves. Let me follow up my illustration and show its application. Suppose the angler has discovered a pool or stream which he can fish from the middle, casting on either side of him, as well as in front. It is, of course, only a kind of "general idea," which must be continually subject to alterations, since no large Scottish river runs with a uniformly even flow, and the wind, if it "lift up its voice," compels attention. May I now suggest to those who believe in the "fine and far-off" theory a few reflections which may prove interesting, perchance also, instructive. It cannot be too well impressed on the angler's mind that, as trout lie with their heads up stream, the aim of the angler should be to get below them, and to cast his line upwards. If, moreover, trout are lying close to the surface, as they do during "the time of the take," surely the first moments of each cast are the most valuable. Grant this; then frequent casting is advisable when "a birth" of the natural fly is strongly in evidence. Kindly attend to my argument, as I point out the well-known fact, that the

distance between two straight but not parallel, and, therefore, divergent lines, having a common starting-point, increases by extension. How about the fine and far-off theory when viewed in this light? Each cast takes longer to make, and it sinks more. It is not so easily or deftly picked off the water, nor can it possibly be so rapidly returned. These points are surely incontrovertible. Therefore, I hold that, when fishing up stream, while wading, the shorter the line, the truer is the fishing. For not only are the casts made more rapidly, but the angler hooks a rising trout with far greater precision than he can possibly do, with a long line, cast up stream.

Now for my last point, and I think it a most important one. The longer the line thrown, the wider is the space left between each cast on the plan laid down, and thus, it follows that, in order to cover or search a pool with any degree of thoroughness, the angler who fishes with a long line must perforce make more casts than he who uses a comparatively short line. This consumes valuable time. Therefore, practice rapid casting with a *comparatively* short line, rather than long (uselessly long) casts, when wading and fishing up stream. But, it may

be urged, it is comparatively seldom that one can command a pool from the centre with good water on both sides. Still, the same fundamental principles should govern the angler who wades up the shallow side of pool (or stream) and fishes from the deeper side. Let him begin by casting directly across, working steadily round, till he finishes by casting straight up stream, and then move up a yard or so and begin afresh.

I have just remarked that you will not find many pools which you can readily command from the centre. They may be there, but have not yet been discovered.

I (in common with every one else) had, for several years, walked regularly past such a place on the Tummel, the bushes interfering with fly-fishing, and deep water making it quite impossible to wade in front of them. One day, when I was wearing my long wading trousers, and the river was somewhat low, I had been fishing up the stream which flowed out of the aforesaid pool. Something tempted me, for the first time, to make an inroad into the pool, from *below*. Judge of my surprise when I found that I could wade (somewhat deep it is true) up the very centre.

From the centre I soon found out, however, that I could not wade ashore to either bank. When I had satisfied myself on this point, I realized that *my* luck had come at last.

I can throw as clean a line against, as with, an ordinary breeze; and so, with fairly deep water (but little disturbed) on both sides of me, all I had to do, was to begin wading the stream slowly upwards, and then the pool—a pool which I afterwards frequently harried to my heart's content.

May I now be permitted to draw a significant picture from life, and an exceedingly common picture, in Scotland, it is, and one which has given rise to many ridiculous strictures on wet-fly fishing by some experts of the dry fly, who have only paid "a flying visit" to the North.

The curtain rises on a local fisherman, and the chances are, that he wields a heavy, clumsy, two-handed rod; and also uses whole-gut, and not too fine gut *at that.*

He starts at the top of the stretch of water he means to fish, and he fishes it *down.* He would laugh, were he told that he had no more idea of watercraft, and of the many interesting problems which present themselves to the true wet-fly angler, than had

his great-grandfather when he fished with a casting line of several links of hand-twisted horsehair, with large, roughly-dressed flies attached to the same substantial and clumsy substitute for gut—three, four, or even five horsehairs, twisted together, to each fly.

A step at each cast; pool and stream fished as nearly alike as may be; and, above all things ridiculous and unthinking, the same methodical casting and swirling round of the line, in a semi-circle, when the trout are rising freely at the natural fly; as he had adopted when there was no sign of "a rise," say, half an hour before.

This is the "how-not-to-do-it" system of wet-fly fishing, and there is not one ounce of brains to a ton of practice, in the whole wretched, uninteresting, unsportsmanlike business.

I trust I shall be able to show, ere I have finished, that we who are rather more advanced in our methods, and are ardent wet-fly enthusiasts, have "a method in our madness," seldom revealed, save to the man who works out his own problems, with patience and untiring energy: and who is never dismayed by non-success, nor unduly elated, when it is his turn to be lucky.

I have said that all rivers are not alike. I know one fine river, for instance, issuing from a loch; the loch itself largely fed by springs, and therefore of a low temperature. How can that river be compared with one which from its source flows placidly, over occasional sandy and gravelly shallows, readily warmed by the sun's rays?

Again, how can barren land, sparse of all insect life, yield the same quality, or size of trout, which are to be found in rivers passing through rich land, deep and sluggish, full of weeds, and teeming, literally teeming, with insect life? All these problems, he who fishes many rivers, will try to solve, if he be anything of an angler. And here, I voluntarily admit that, especially when I was a young and inexperienced river fisherman, I have often fished "down." The temptation, especially when a high wind is blowing straight down the stream, is enormous; and there are times when, the river being a rapid one, and the wind fierce, one is driven to down-stream fishing by sheer necessity.

Even as an old hand, there have been occasions when I have had to cast down stream to save the situation; but then, when I am driven to do this, I know now how to

make the best of a bad business. I know how to prevent my line trailing helplessly and hurriedly across to my own side in a kind of semi-circular curve or swirl. Then, why do I not explain my method? My answer is easily given. Would you have a lecturer dwell upon his own bygone slips and stumbles, in order to teach others how to walk? I trow not. The more a learner fishes *up* and the *less* he fishes *down* the better fisherman in the long run is he likely to make. I avoid unduly dwelling upon (far less teaching) down-stream fishing, which a weary and tired young hand drifts into only too easily, without any teaching of mine; especially under circumstances such as I have mentioned. I desire to preach the doctrine of "good form" in river fishing, *i.e.* up-stream fishing, or up and across, at most; not down stream fishing.

Since I began (more than half a century ago) remember that great strides have been made, and that what was then excusable in a young angler, would be nothing short of very regrettable "form" in any intelligent young fellow, starting to-day. *He* must be abreast of the times, else he will be an old-fashioned fisherman at the outset, and

simply nowhere in thirty years' time. What says the pithy proverb? "As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined."

If the beginner wants to get into really "good form," he must *not* begin by tampering with "bad form." The way to undo all genuine progress as an up-stream wet-fly fisherman is to take it easy: to turn your back to the source, to fish down, and to let your line trail idiotically through the water *somehow*. Much of this kind of thing soon forms a habit, a lazy habit, which must be avoided at the outset, like poison. I trust to be able to show that we wet-fly fishermen, have methods of our own, of the deepest possible interest; methods, however, which are seldom revealed, save to the earnest enthusiast, who loves to work out his own problems.

The rod most suited to any particular fisherman is largely a matter of taste. Some men prefer a two-handed trout rod for a large river. I have a very excellent rod of fourteen feet, and I seldom use it. So much for taste. But, it is not what I have done, or *do*, for I may be often wrong, and doubtless am often mistaken; but, when I see how invariably the best fly-fishermen take to a rod which they can use

easily with one hand, I am strengthened in my faith in such rods.

As for its length, that is a matter of wrist power and daily use; but 10½ to 11½ feet is a useful length for the fly rod on a large river. A great deal of excellent work can be done with one of 10½ or 11 feet, as I can testify, provided that the rod be powerful enough to lift a long line "clean" off the water, without which the rod has no real backbone. People do not sufficiently realize that lifting the line "clane an' cliver" off the water is the first great essential to any well-delivered cast. If the line at the lifting gets "drowned," the forward throw will prove a failure.

It is here that so many cheap, ready-made shop rods fail utterly; they are mere toys, unless they possess power. And I hold that the perfection of a rod reads, *Backbone plus delicacy*, and that delicacy is a delusion minus "backbone."

I have already spoken of rods, and I will say no more save that, even on a large river, I never throw a very long line, if, by wading fairly deep, I can attain my object. But it is well to be able to do so, since he who can throw an extra long line will occasionally get his fly over trout which

are never even disturbed by the average fly-fisherman. This is, perhaps, a remote possibility; and I hold that the practical, hard-headed fisherman will do all his best work with a moderate length of line.

How, then, should a man fish a river? "With brains, sir!" I would answer, in the words of the author of "Horæ Subsecivæ" (Dr. John Brown). Muddy and flooded rivers I abominate! When the river gets clear, or is even the colour of port wine, I am ready to begin. I prefer it to be absolutely clear and colourless.

In a full, clear river, especially in the early spring, one can afford to let the fly dwell longer than would be consistent with good form later on in the season.

Even thus early—as soon as the flies appear on the surface—the moment, in fact, that the "rise" commences, rapid and light casting, and fishing as near to the surface as is possible, must be the angler's aim.

There are those who fish like a mere machine: who use a long line and sink their flies at all times and seasons. Their casting-lines, with the flies attached thereto, must frequently pass *underneath* the trout which they are endeavouring to secure,

during the time of the take. Can anything be more absurd?

This brings me to a subject of very great interest indeed: a subject, all the same, which I approach with considerable misgiving. I mean fishing, not only with a wet fly, but with a fly that is purposely allowed to sink, the "drowned" or "sunk" fly.

The beginner—yea, even he who is more than a beginner—may naturally ask such questions as these.

Under what circumstances is it wise to sink the fly? What seasons, conditions of wind, water, and so forth? To which questions I can only say that when I myself go forth of a morning, I cannot tell how I shall fish on that particular day. Nature is largely my guide, and the trout my best teachers.

Much depends upon how the day turns out—if it be windy or calm, sunny or dull, warm or cold; whether the trout rise freely at the natural insect, or hardly rise at all. And last, whether the wind strikes the water from below upwards, or from above downwards: a circumstance which affects the manner of my own fly-fishing materially. Of course, though I cannot lay down

any fixed rules (for I know of none myself), I am ready to indicate broadly the lines upon which I sink the fly purposely. I must again illustrate this subject by one or two word pictures, after which, I think, my meaning will be tolerably clear to most readers.

Sketch No. 1.

I have started for a day's fishing on the Tweed, Tummel, Don, Deveron, Isla, or Cumberland Eden; say, in the middle of April. For the past few days, the weather has been quite genial; wind south-west; flies have been not only in evidence but in abundance. I have fished successfully with the ordinary wet fly, but have never really gone in for the sunk fly, save, perhaps, late in the afternoon, when the air got chilly and trout had ceased to lie near the surface. This morning I find the wind is from the north or east, and there is not even a blink of sunshine to warm the atmosphere. It is bitterly cold! "Why fish?" says some one. Well, because I have sometimes made my heaviest baskets in weather so cold that I could hardly fish without repeatedly warming my hands, in the manner common to cabmen when standing on the rank in frosty weather.

I go over the same ground as I did the day before, and I do nothing worth speaking of, while fishing in the orthodox way. The river I am thinking of at present, is a portion of the Deveron very well known to me, where an up-stream wind, by reason of twists and turns, strikes this part of the river from above downwards. I feel that if I fish all day where I am, the chances are that I shall return home with a light basket. Many a good angler is baffled on such a day. He may throw a perfect line, he may fish up stream, he may know the river and the right flies to use, and yet may be hopelessly beaten by the man who fishes no better than he does himself, but who thinks out his problems carefully; which is essential to success when wet-fly fishing, under difficulties.

I walk rapidly across the meadows, passing a good deal of fine water on my way. "What on earth is the man about?" I hear some angler say. "He is leaving *me* all the best of the fishing; but let him go, by all means!"

Arriving, I find, to my joy, that the wind is striking the water from below upwards. It is just what I expected. There is but little stream here. It is a longish pool,

with sufficient "glide," however, to form on the surface a series of little waves as it meets the up-stream wind. The pool is shallow on my own side, with excellent wading (gravel and sand). I do not always begin at the bottom to wade up. Sometimes I do, but not to-day. Why? Because the wind is blowing in gusts, pretty strongly too, and every time I lift my rod up, the line is apt to be blown clean out of the water, with a flare sufficient to frighten every fish in the pool. I, therefore, do not raise my rod hand, as in ordinary fly-fishing. I walk quietly up to the middle of the pool, and wade in, very gently indeed. Here the wind strikes the water with less violence, and I shall fish it up or down, according as I find it fish best and easiest. In such a day I have no rigid rules. The wind is blowing somewhat across as well as up, towards the bushes which fringe the deeper and further shore, where the waves are largest. My eyes search the water for some sign of "a rise," and at last I see a "splash" on the crest of a wavelet, and then another. There is a small "birth" of flies probably, and the stragglers are taken as "drowned" flies over there at the further side. I am full of hope; for, even

if the trout had not been rising, I still meant to kill a good creelful here with such a suitable wind for the sunk fly. The evidence that some trout are really looking out, naturally adds to my expectations very considerably. I do not cast in the ordinary manner. With a rapid switch, my line flies upwards and across. Why? Should the fisherman raise his rod vertically, the wind will only belly out his line, and thus drag it out of the water in no time.

A fly drawn across a river in the opposite direction to the then prevailing wind, is being very badly fished.

As a rule, a wet fly kills best when it is allowed to float down stream, just as a natural fly does.

Now, a "drowned" fly must *necessarily* follow the current, and therefore the thing to aim at is to allow the artificial fly, *when sunk*, to take a similar course—*i.e.* the course of the stream. At first blush, the method which I employ at such a time, seems to be unscientific, and a direct contradiction to my own precepts. In reality it is nothing of the kind.

When I have thrown my fly across and up, I then turn the point of the rod down stream, holding it quite near to, and parallel

with, the surface of the water, as thus held, the wind has little or no opportunity of tearing the line violently out of the water.

At first I do not give any motion, however small, to my flies. Presently, however, I impart a little life to them, still holding the rod low and the point down stream. To hold the rod, at present, up stream, would be folly. The line being cast in a slanting direction above the angler, and then allowed to sink three to five inches, the only hope of keeping in constant touch with one's flies is to hold one's rod *well down stream.* I now give, as it were, a pull, and then allow the line to become perfectly slack. If I did not pull upon it occasionally, it would sink too much.

The while I am pulling I generally do nothing. I will be understood when I add that, as I slack off and allow the flies to follow the current, then indeed am I all alive. My eye is on the line as well as on the flies. When I see my line suddenly get *taut*, my hand responds simultaneously. The main object, of course, is to get on terms with the trout as quickly as possible, so as to avoid any direct pull of the fish upon the butt of the rod. This is very apt to occur in this style of fishing, because, of

course, of the rod being held so low; but, unless the rod be held quite close to, and parallel with, the water, this deadly form of fly-fishing cannot be practised with success. To me it is most enjoyable sport, but it has its difficulties, one of which is self-evident (especially if this method is used in a strong current), for, when a large trout takes the fly, you have scarcely got time to elevate the point of your rod; and if, when rod, line, and gut collar all point in the same direction, a large fish goes off with a rush, every effort must be made to give him his head till the point of the rod is raised. Consequently a stiff or a crowded reel is worse than useless for this style of fly-fishing. It should pay out as fast and as smoothly as it is possible for it to do.

Many hundreds of times have I been compelled to use my left hand to throw the reel-line out, and right freely too, in order to gain time to play the trout, not from the butt, but from the middle and top joints of the rod.

At times, when trout run large, I have had most exciting sport, but have frequently run and lost two trout (sometimes three) for every one I have creeled; from this cause. If once I got my rod into position,

I was pretty sure of killing that trout. I remember fishing the Tweed below Mertoun Bridge on one occasion, the wind being up stream. A Scottish parson (who could fish), when he saw me at work, waded in within a yard or two of me and tried to snatch the sport from under my very nose. At last he grew angry, and in an injured tone asked me what fly I was killing with. I waded ashore, showed him my own flies, and even gave him some out of the very same lot; but, as he was so unsportsmanlike, I did not tell him the real secret of my success. I was holding the rod's point down stream, and quite close to the surface, gently "working" the flies in the manner described, and just under the waves. Had I killed half of the trout I hooked that day, I should have had a record basket. I did well as it was. Even when no trout are seen rising, I should be quite certain to try any fine sheet of fairly smooth water *if not too deep*, with a good rattling up-stream breeze meeting the current of the river in this way, for I can soon tell, with my experience, if it is no use. Indeed, it is only by the exercise of our ingenuity, that we wet-fly fishermen can at times, make a good basket, even in a river which is full

of trout. At other times one loses but few trout fishing in this way. This generally means that the wind is a moderate, but of course an up-stream one, and the current itself gentle; for we have then a tolerably fair chance of getting the rod's point raised in time, and thus save each trout at the first wild burst, which is not so easy to do as it is to write about.

I recall an incident which I mentioned in one of my papers in the *Fishing Gazette?* I was fishing the Deveron. The keeper was with me all day (the only day he ever was; as his other duties tied him down too closely to permit of such a thing, save on the very rarest occasion). The river was low, very low; and the part of the water I was fishing (for the first time) above Turriff, was a good deal thrashed.

I had done less than usual, when we arrived at a spot where the waters rushed down from the pool above, in a kind of narrow, deep throat, thus causing an eddy on either side, and gradually forming a nice streamy pool. In no time, the water was almost carpeted with a late hatch of March Browns. The trout kept rising all over the place, in their usual mad manner, when the March Brown is in abundance. Of course

I did little or nothing, while the trout had such a large choice of natural flies. No one ever does, during any such glut, or surfeit, as this.

I then began to cudgel my brains; and my expedient was wholly original, so far as I was concerned. I saw that I was going to be badly beaten, and would return home with a miserable show of trout, unless I could hit upon some novel means of turning defeat into victory. Was I capable of doing so?

At last, I decided to leave the trout to rise as they liked, and went down the river. Here the stream flowed gradually into the pool, with just a nice little breeze, rippling the surface. Off went my ordinary flies, and on went a small double-hooked midge, for the end fly, Greenwell's Glory, size 00, and a single fly, No. 1, for the dropper. Then a trout broke the surface; and he at once took my double midge fly. In the end, I had 12 lbs. of trout. The keeper stood by, watching me all the time, and expressed his surprise at the double midge fly, killing so well. Also, at my unusual tactics, in leaving so many rising trout, to go where almost none were to be seen feeding.

Now, the problem worked out thus, in

my mind. I argued, that the trout had by far too great a choice of flies at the top of the stream, even to look at any imitation of mine. At the neck, or throat, the wind first struck a miniature earth-cliff, or "scaur" (under the shadow of which I had been standing); and as it glanced off, across the rapid waters, I noticed how it frequently engulfed numbers of March Browns. Then, I argued further, that out of this hurly-burly, here and there a solitary FLOATING March Brown would also find itself carried into the pool round the bend; and I reflected after this fashion—

If only a few stray floating flies sail down into the next pool, they will wake up the trout therein to a certainty, and this too, without the chance of such a surfeit as was all too evident at the throat of the stream. These stray flies, I argued, will set a trout feeding here, and another trout rising there; than which condition of things, there is none so conducive to a heavy creel.

Besides, a good many drowned flies would also be carried down stream. These, as they reached the stiller waters of the pool itself, would slowly sink, and thus give warning to every trout in the pool to look about also, for the few *floating* March

Browns that were coming down from the rapids above. I confess that I expected more from the numbers of the submerged, drowned flies, than from the few (very few) living flies still left on the surface itself. Whatever may be said or thought of these motives or methods, they saved the day.

The river was very low; the trout were getting rather hard to catch, and I had done but little.

As I was taking off my waders, the keeper noticed a neighbouring proprietor, who was a first-class and very active fisherman, and who often made very heavy baskets, a man as hard as nails, and a harder nut to crack. He had just fished up the very best of the water, and was making a few up-stream final casts, below Turriff Bridge, to wind up the day till his trap came. Down went the keeper to see him, and I fully expected to learn that he had made a heavy basket, as was his wont.

To my surprise, he had done next to nothing. I at once asked the friendly keeper to take a little lot of the tiny "doubles" down to him, with my compliments; and to say, from me, that, but for these, I also should have done next to nothing. He accepted the flies graciously,

with some surprise at their size, but I trust he has often had good reason to thank me for my introduction to the tiny "doubles." Had I used the same small flies, where the March Browns were in their thousands, I would not have benefited. The trout would have passed them by, scornfully.

The real turning-point that day was just as I have indicated.

Then came the intuitive feeling that I must use quite small flies; and I succeeded. I think I hear some reader say, "What a 'pow-wow' about 12 lbs. of trout." Well! there was nothing very great in that, I admit; a very ordinary basket, but not on that day.

It is worth recording all the same; though I wish to observe that such tactics are by no means to be made the rule.

I have a great difficulty in tearing myself away from free-rising trout. They fascinate me, I think. And it was only by a mighty effort, therefore, that I found myself at the pool below where so few trout were feeding, every one of which, however, was a taking fish, if well fished for. They had not known surfeit that day.

The moral of the story amounts to this.

Suppose you come upon a regular surfeit

of flies (and I have seen many such in my experience, particularly when the March Brown is well on), just do your best where you are. If, then, you find (as I have often done), that, during such a fly-festival, the trout know the real from the artificial, however cleverly the latter is presented to them, and that they continue feeding upon the natural flies, whilst taking no notice whatever of the cleverest imitation, then it is surely worth while to try the plan which succeeded with me, namely, to reel up and walk down to another part of the river, not too far distant, and there try your luck.

I do not for one moment promise you success, for it was an out-of-the-way expedient; but I am sure you will find such tactics answer well, at times.

Again, when the fly-fisher is caught in a gale of wind, especially the kind of gale that comes in wild blasts, how should he meet the situation? The exposed places, particularly the portions of a river where the banks are steep and bare of trees—a gorge, in fact—these places are to be avoided then. The best thing he can do is to seek a sheltered nook, and there, perchance, he may find some trout gently feeding, and be able to fish in comparative

comfort. Or he may find a pool where the force of the wind is greatly broken by the shelter of some friendly bend, and where, the wind being up stream, he can sink his flies, as already described.

Thus he may fill his creel, which he could not very easily do, in the exposed parts of the river, during the gale.

The angler may know all the rules—written and unwritten—*but he must also know when to free himself from their bondage, and to allow his own intuitive instincts a free range.*

When trout are not rising, I, at times, draw a bow at a venture, and, forsaking the ordinary wet fly for the "sunk fly," I soon read the river's mind on the question. If it does not succeed, I do not necessarily continue it. If, when I am doing nothing worth speaking of, and am quite conscious that I have got the right flies, as regards pattern and size, and also that I am fishing fairly well, then I *do* think I would be a fool not to try, say for half an hour, sinking and working some soft-feathered winged or hackled fly as a mere "feeler," "to see how the wind blows." If, upon trial, I found the point of my rod boldly pulled down by a fine trout, and the reel in a fit of hysterics,

screeching like a girl when a mouse runs over her foot, surely to continue my method is wisdom's choice, at least, so long as it succeeds.

Sometimes it answers uncommonly well. If it does not, I return to more congenial and orthodox methods. Of course, if a hatch of flies presently transforms the scene, no one but a rank duffer would continue to sink the fly; as then, of course, the trout come quite near to the surface, and the endeavour must be to float rather than to sink the fly. Then, how glorious it is, when there is a good rise—not a mass of flies, for that invariably is fatal to great results, but just a fair sprinkling of flies, which serve only to stimulate the trout, rather than to satiate—and gorge them: to mark down any large-sized individual trout; to get below them, to fish up, and, one by one, to basket the fish, till you have creeled half a score to a score of pounds-weight of trout. I can imagine nothing on earth more enjoyable than a time like this; and it is in the hope that I may be the means of helping others to partake of many such pleasant hours, that I am writing this chapter at all.

Wading trousers coming up to the waist

allow a tall man to command water which he could not otherwise do. Many a fine basket of trout is got thus in large rivers, especially in the early spring—the angler perhaps not fishing more than one or two pools all the day, and yet filling his basket. And I unhesitatingly affirm that the same water fished by short waders, and reached only by long casts with a two-handed rod, of say 14 or 15 feet, would produce no such results; as a long line sinks, and this, while trout are really on the surface, is as undesirable as it is to fish the surface, when the trout are lying a little depth below it, in order to take the submerged insect as a drowned fly. It is this "war of wits" that lends to wet-fly fishing one of its peculiar charms. To know how and when to float, also how and when to slightly sink, or even to *sink well* the fly, so as to produce a successful result, must be the aim of the fishermen of our particular school, who literally "look below the surface." It is naturally pleasanter to walk with one's head erect; but to stoop in order to conquer is, I maintain, quite sportsmanlike, especially when it becomes a necessity. I have no patience with those who will not "stoop," who perhaps do not know how to, and who,

when the wet fly should be distinctly sunk, say that "they" would never sink it. The whole position is illogical and absurd. I honour the dry-fly purist, who never sinks a fly on principle; but once a man admits the principle of fishing in our Northern rivers with the wet fly, to refuse to sink it, at times, rather more than is usual seems ridiculous.

A wet fly can be, and generally is, fished quite near to the surface, but it is still submerged.

A "*sunk* fly" is often two, three, or four inches under the surface (even more at times). Here may I give an emphatic word of warning to the beginner? viz. *let the "sunk fly" "be your crutch, not your staff"*— in Sir Walter Scott's strong words: let it, in fact, be kept back; nay, more, let it be withheld, till you realize that all other methods have failed on that day, and that you are badly beaten. And (unless some flies begin to hatch out and change the aspect of things materially) then I say boldly, try your luck with the sunk fly; and remember—

For one man who understands how to do this, to advantage, there are twenty at least who do not, and whose sunk flies would

do no execution whatever, because they lack the requisite judgment and delicacy.

Pools in any large river are usually fished differently to the streams.

A river when brimful (as I have pointed out) is fished on very different lines from the methods employed when it has fallen to summer level.

It is, to the fisherman, to all intents and purposes, another river then.

Again, the force and direction of the wind are important factors which cannot be ignored.

I have said that I dislike to fish a muddy river, even if it may be, as at times I am assured it is, a favourable time for big results. I have never found it so myself; but, beyond question, others have occasionally done so, and it is perfectly legitimate to take trout with the wet fly then. Choose, if you can, some broad and rather shallow pool. Any one who knows "Monks-Ford" * above Dryburgh, on the Tweed, and has seen it when a flood was subsiding, will bear witness that it is an exceptionally good place then, and is very easy to wade.

Somehow, trout are often to be seen

* It is *now* strictly preserved water.

rising in such places, in a heavy water, as if to invite the angler to try his luck. But unless the angler knows it well, he must be very chary in attempting to wade a river when in flood—especially if he cannot swim—as a step into deep water, say in the Tweed, may prove a serious matter. Those who have never tried it, have no idea what it means to wade too far down-stream when the river is running full and flowing swiftly.

It is fairly easy, so long as you can *go on*, and no serious hitch occurs; but if, suddenly, you step into a hole up to your waist, and, discovering your mistake, then have to turn and go back, and find deep water near shore, you will need all the muscular power your limbs possess, and you will need also, a cool head. Turning round is always difficult, and at times risky work; and to force your way back, inch by inch, with your waders full of water, is no holiday task, as I have found ere now.

I speak from experience, for I was at one time so keen, that I often chanced it, and I have had some very anxious moments and even narrow escapes. Of all things, it is well to wear a good pair of boots, or brogues, with square-headed

iron, but *never steel*-headed nails. Steel slips terribly on the face of a smooth stone, and is to be avoided. Square-headed nails, set a little apart, give a better grip than do round-headed hobnails — called "*tackets*" in Scotland.

Once I very nearly came to utter grief while wading Loch Griam, in Sutherlandshire. I had about 15 lbs. of trout in my creel (18 lbs. gross weight) at the time. A tempest had caused the water on the lee shore, where I was wading (keen as mustard and rather recklessly), to become thick and peaty. The crisis came, as I stepped forward quickly, to cast my flies, during a momentary lull, into the teeth of the wind. I had stepped up to the waist over a hidden danger—a bank of gravel and sand, with a slope only just sufficient to permit me to set my feet edgeways thereon, which saved me. After this and other experiences of the kind, I invented my safety buckle, which I have found most valuable, as the fisherman can be relieved of his creel in a second, and this too without fatigue.

The real poetry of fly-fishing comes in when the rivers are of normal volume and quite clear, and in quite large rivers, like

the Tay or Tweed, even in a low water; for, remember, there are rivers *and* rivers. Wading up stream, which may be a perfectly easy matter in one, is such hard work in another, when fairly full, in particular, as to be only a waste of time and throwing away of energy. Beyond these considerations is the fact that wading against a very strong current makes twice as much disturbance in the water as wading with it; and it is folly when it comes to that.

While advocating wading and fishing up stream in a large river, I do not wish my meaning to be misinterpreted. Take, for example, the lower portions of the Tweed. How could any man wade all day against the force of that grand old river when full? and even if he could, wherein would he benefit? Nothing so absurd shall be recommended by me. One must use common sense. Parts of the lower Tweed, even when running full and clear, can, of course, be waded up; others must be waded downwards—yes, even when our flies are being thrown upwards, or up and across, and when the fisherman's face is turned towards the source. At the very beginning of the season, in bitterly cold weather, with hardly a fly to be seen, you

may, if you do it with skill, occasionally score by fishing down stream; but, rather than preach and teach the practice of down-stream fishing, I would lay down my pen, and burn my manuscript.

I return with relief to the fishing of our Scottish rivers when normal, or even below normal in volume, and clear as crystal.

It is a real and high pleasure to make a good basket, under such conditions. My rule, then, is to wade up, and to fish up in all places where it is at all feasible. The larger the river, the less the opportunity presents itself to fish little nooks, eddies, runs, and turns, and, in fact, all the charming "bits" which all born fishermen so love. In a quite low river, there is a nearer approach to all this, than at any other time.

As I have already mentioned, large Scottish rivers, when abnormally low, are fished very much after the principles and methods adopted by the wet-fly fisherman, when fishing his own tributary streams—"waters," in fact.

I shall now presume that I am dealing with the subject, not in the too early spring, when trout are flabby, and the sport

of catching them is questionable, but when they are in condition. The lateness or the reverse of the fishing season, on any particular river, depends on many circumstances; its height above the sea-level, for one.

For instance, one river I once knew well (in Perthshire) does not begin to fish till May Day, as a rule; whilst in others, quite as far north, fly-fishing towards the middle of May, is already getting somewhat past its best. In the choice of flies, my rule is to consult Nature first. Frequently, however, this rule must be ignored, the trout preferring one of the droppers, for some quite unaccountable reason, it being wholly unlike the natural fly of the hour. Even when a dropper has been tied on gut much too stout, I have seen the trout evince such a preference for it, that I have placed its fellow as the tail fly, and at once found the change beneficial. I feel sure of one thing, and I wish it to be noted carefully, that our artificial flies, in wet-fly fishing, are not presented to a trout's vision, in the same manner as when they are floated over them dry, and with their wings cocked. I shall take away the breath of some purist anglers when I say that, often when I wish

my fly to sink one or two inches as soon as thrown, I deliberately take the wings and hackle between the fore-finger and thumb of my right hand, and, having wet my fingers well, rub the feathers thoroughly.

Especially has this discovery of mine been found to be useful, in fine and calm weather, when the smallest midge-flies, "doubles" or even "singles," were to the front. If the learner will take a fly, and place it dry in a tumbler of water, he will find that it is largely kept from sinking by reason of air-bells. The wings look as if they were coated with a thin layer of glass, whilst small bells get entangled amongst the fibres of the hackle. These air-bubbles, I am certain, often make the trout needlessly suspicious of a wet fly. The bubbles get completely rubbed out, partly because the wet finger and thumb, thus deprive the feathers of their natural oil. Be that as it may, I boldly avow that when I have observed trout shyly regarding small midge-flies, newly put on, I have rubbed the feathers well with wetted finger and thumb, and have begun to basket them rapidly immediately afterwards. A drowned and bedraggled natural fly must surely present a very different appearance to the beauteous

object upon which the sun's rays seemed "to shine too rudely" but a short time previously. Also, may not trout sometimes get sick of a surfeit of one particular fly?

I always endeavour to catch one of the flies just as the rise begins, and if I have got a good imitation in my book, I give to it the place of honour—the tail fly, or stretcher. If it does not kill well, I go on changing that tail fly, till I succeed.

The words of a distinguished physician, are very appropriate, at such times: "'Tis at best but shrewd guessing!" The correct fly for the day at last becomes a certainty, and, this point once decided, I continue fishing steadily and uninterruptedly.

How delightful it is to find the trout feeding gently, but meaning business—say, on the further side, where the pool slumbers under the very shadow of the bank. There must be no bungling here. Every cast must be true, and in its place. I have said that fishing up stream with the fly, at times, becomes a sheer absurdity, during a strong down-stream wind. This is especially so when a rapid stream brings the line racing towards the angler, like a boat before the wind.

When a light wind, or even an ordinary

breeze, is blowing *across* and in my face from the opposite bank, I cast the fine gut collar in the teeth of the wind; and what may seem unaccountable and strange is that I have often found the zone of calm close to the other bank—which the wind cannot strike, as it is blowing *towards* me—the deadliest place of all. From the overhanging bank, perchance, insects drop, or are blown, into the water.

So, if you cast your fly (by "cheating the wind") right under the further bank; you will probably be rewarded. It is very pretty fishing, but it needs an experienced fisherman to do it well.

How naturally you find yourself stooping as you attack any shallow piece of water, every foot of which must be fished *up*.

Here judicious wading greatly aids the angler.

It is a common thing to see an otherwise good angler wading ashore with each good trout, when, by such a plan as the one I use (and invented) the trout can be netted and basketed just where he is wading, and with perfect ease too. He thus loses no time, and can fish uninterruptedly—an advantage too obvious to be open to criticism.

Occasionally trout may be observed lying close to the very margin of a large bed of gravel, nipping up the "sand" and "cow-dung" flies, which are blown across the dry bed towards the river; and when this is observed, the hint should be acted upon instantly. The fisherman should stalk these feeding trout, stooping, or even crawling on hands and knees, and whipping the thin edges of the stream upwards, but never allowing the line to dwell for more than one or two seconds on the surface.

It was in this way that I hooked the largest trout I ever killed with a small No. 2 fly, in the Tweed, and which weighed 5 lbs. 1 oz. He seemed to be lying in water scarcely sufficient to cover him. He seized and *held* the fly as it crossed his nose, giving no indication of a "rise" whatever. It was therefore with some surprise that I found myself dashing into the river up to the tops of my waders, throwing out the reel line with my left hand the while, as he rushed across a grand salmon cast into the pool below — "The Webs" — "The Woabs," as old Slater, the fisherman, used to call it. But for "observation," I should never have even seen that trout.

N.B.—Some men would have been *wading* just where he was feeding.

This leads me to observe that the shallow edge, on the side of a deepish but rapid run, is far too often passed over, save by the angler's wading-boots.

When a large trout is hungry, and there is no hatch of flies to attract his attention, he often goes prowling around the edges, where he can pick up flies, creepers, fresh-water shrimps, and minnows; and if, while he is feeding, a fly is skilfully presented by a quite invisible angler, he will take it. Then look out, if your tackle is fine! The man, I repeat, who simply "sweeps" or "combs" a river mechanically, loses many of the details which are so distinctly delightful to the true sportsman.

When a large river like the Tweed is pretty full, yet clear, or at most porter or port wine in colour, one of the places which should always be carefully fished up, is where the waters seem to pause, ere they glide from the pool above, into the stream below. This on Tweedside is called "the hing—" *Anglicé* "the hang."

Doubtless the trout here pick up many a dainty tit-bit ere it gets swept away into the rapid stream, or streams, immediately

below. I remember quite well, how, in the river Tummel, in the old days, I used to succeed in a signal manner, when thus fishing; and indeed in no river, before or since, have I found feeding trout so constantly lying in "the hang," as in this charming river.

Our flies must always be allowed to float, or sink, with the natural current of the river. Any unnatural drag, or aimless and stupid trailing around, of the flies, means failure. It was difficult; and therefore most pleasurable fishing to me. Of course, when the trout were rising at the natural fly, the method of attack was directness and simplicity itself, to an old hand. Standing a little below, the cast was delivered so that the flies alighted six inches above the rise, and were allowed simply to sail down for a yard or so. Here, it is a point of immense importance to know how to pick your line off any short hing, without giving the slightest note of alarm. Needless to add, the line should be lifted, with the point of the rod turned downwards. The angler must not stand above the place to be fished, else the flies will travel in the arc of a circle, and are never taken properly, then. I

repeat, that the whole aim of the fisherman should be, to allow his flies to glide down naturally, *without the remotest circling or trailing across;* and, if this is properly done, when a trout is lying a few inches under the surface, he quietly sucks the fly in.

He bolts, when he finds himself hooked, by the action of the strong under-current.

These places often "fished well," even when no trout were breaking the surface of that fine river; but why, I have little or no idea.

The most desirable fishing is, when, from the breadth and volume of the river, the hang is one of considerable length and width, and where the fall, into the stream below, is very gradual, not abrupt. Then, when a few flies begin to disport themselves on the surface, we have the prospect of a piece of the most charming fly-fishing possible in any large river. In this connection, I am only too glad to be able to mention a case in point. The fisherman was not, in this instance, E. M. Tod, but a very old and dear friend of his. He waded in below "the hing," and used only one fly — the stretcher — a thing we all do occasionally. The fly was Greenwell's Glory, tied on tiny 00 double hooks, by

Forrest & Sons, of Kelso. He was reluctant to speak of it, even to me, but at last I got the exact details.

They convey to *me* the idea of an absolutely perfect afternoon's fly-fishing. There was not a breath of wind on "the hing." Also it was quite flat water, and Tweed trout are cunning old dogs; yet in less than three hours my old friend had creeled twenty-three trout, which weighed 16 lbs. 12 ozs.; his best dozen weighing 12 lbs. 12 ozs.

With large flies (March browns) in the early spring, such a basket and average on the Tweed would be one to be proud of; but, under the particular circumstances, it was a remarkable performance, one I myself never saw equalled on that river in my life, taking into consideration the whole details now given, the "average," not least.

He, of course, knew how to cast and how to place his fly—very few better.

When trout are feeding on the surface: (1) wade gently; (2) make each cast a true one; (3) cast up and across (at times straight up); (4) don't sink your flies more than you can help, because trout at present are expecting to see the natural insect floating down with gauzy wings erect on

RIVER FISHING.

"The Hang" of the stream, named by old Tweed fishers "The Hing."

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the surface; (5) cast repeatedly, and when a trout takes the fly, tighten the line instantly rather than "strike:" then up with the point of the rod and get command of your trout as soon as you can; (6) finally, net him, if possible, just where you are standing, in the water. Methodically continue to search the hang step by step across the river, and back again, till you have fished it completely out.

Use two or even three flies. I prefer two flies placed six feet apart, when I am fishing in a dead calm, or wherever trout are over-fished, to the usual three flies one yard apart; but I use, at times, only one.

It is a very consoling thing, when one returns with a light creel, to blame the weather. As a rule, the best sky is a uniformly grey one ("a grey day" is proverbial); the clouds not low, but high; the day bracing, not bitterly cold. In early spring, a blink of sunshine now and again is very desirable; but in May or June, a hot sun with large towering white "cumulus" clouds (full of electricity, doubtless) is not a propitious day for fly-fishing. A bright sunny day *without a single cloud*, but with a gentle breeze blowing up stream, I have often found excellent. A dark, lowering day,

the clouds floating near to the earth's surface; or a day with a heavy mist, are seldom propitious for the fly-fisherman.

Rain, again, is a very queer factor—very queer, indeed—for or against our sport. Sometimes, during rain, trout rise well; and, occasionally, I have done well, even on a dark, misty, lowering day. Hope is the angler's angel!

Who, with a long experience of Scottish rivers, is not familiar with that peculiar phenomenon for which it is so hard to find fitting words?

It is best illustrated by one of my many experiences.

I was giving a lesson to a worthy clergyman one dull afternoon, on the Deveron. I made an unusually poor show of it on that day. Trout would *not* rise; and if, perchance, they came for my fly, it was in a lazy, sleepy sort of fashion. It reminded one of a used-up young man who, towards the close of the London season, sits out his dances. I had seen the same phenomenon before, and said to my clerical pupil, "I feel convinced that we are in for a flood." "How so, Mr. Tod?" "I judge by the way the trout are behaving to-day," I answered.

Next day, down came the river, sure enough! Whether barometric pressure is the cause, or whether the trout taste the first whiff of the fresh water, I cannot say: the effect is the same. We have much to learn, and the trout, if well and patiently studied, will help us in our inquiries.

I do not regard wet-fly fishing as one of the exact sciences.

The conditions of climate, soil, elevation, and consequently of the natural food-supply in one river are often very much at variance with those in another. This fact cannot be too well grasped. If it be not understood, the angler who fishes many rivers will fail in some, *and fail badly too.* In certain of our Scottish rivers, much of the sport in April, is got by fishing slightly under, and occasionally *well* under the surface; while in other rivers deep fishing will yield but a poor result, and one must be content to make nearly all one's hay while the sun shines, *i.e.* while the rise of the natural fly is on. *Per contra*, it is often the other way up. Early in May, on the river Tummel, I have gone out day after day, and though nothing approaching a rise of flies was to be seen; yet, with the artificial fly only, I invariably returned

with a good basket of trout, averaging two to the pound.

The weather there on May Day, 1877, reminded me of mid-winter, snow and frost prevailing, and the wind almost enough to produce frost-bitten fingers. The sunk fly was therefore the only chance. A few flies of my own tying, did so well that I must give their dressing. No. 1 is a hackled fly, and made thus: body, yellow tying silk, waxed. The glossy neck-feather of the cock starling, wound round twice, formed the hackle; and immediately under this I added a very tiny ball of green peacock herl. (2) Another good fly had the same body and hackle, but no peacock herl, and a single upright wing (tied in a neat bunch) taken from the quill-feather of the starling, the inside of the feather being kept outside carefully. (3) Another fly was dark quill body, black hen hackle, and the inside of a starling's wing for wing. (4) Greenwell's Glory I am never without, so you may be sure *it* was in constant use.

On the Deveron I have made a higher aggregate than in the last-named river, but never have I loved any stream more than I did the river Tummel. Probably my

success there was largely owing to my love for, and knowledge of, the river, its fishing, and its romantic surroundings.

Lest I be accused (like the heathen) of "conceiving a vain thing," I may remark that few anglers have been more frequently beaten, yes, hopelessly and entirely beaten, by the trout, than myself. All my angling diaries prove this. Especially has this been so when I have been fishing the Tweed and the Teviot, for any length of time, continuously. For, in these hard-poached and harder-fished rivers—open to all, night and day—the state of the river itself, and of the weather, is often unfavourable for sport, and the daily record; till some change occurs, such as a big flood to sweep the river-bed clean, is apt to prove disappointing. At times, one's holiday begins under very favourable conditions, and we go home, when our two or three weeks have come to an end, little thinking how much our success has been due to circumstances entirely beyond our control. Here is an instance.

On my first visit to the Cumberland Eden (it was rather late in the season it is true) the river was never once in condition. In disgust, I went on a tour through the Lake District for four or five days, and

returned, feeling sure that, at last, I would have a beautifully clear stream, with both water and barometer "in a settled state," and then . . . R-R-Revenge!

I arrived in the evening, only to find that a storm, in the hills, had again made it muddy.

Each time it began to clear, this occurred. Not one single big *cleansing* flood followed, but a series of small risings. Coming after a prolonged drought, these merely stirred up all the filth, and sickened the trout.

I had a very poor record for that yearly holiday trip.

I however returned, and more than made up for my former ill luck, by my next two holiday trips, on that charming river.

Under the title of "Reminiscences of an Old Angler," the *Fishing Gazette* published, in 1893, the record of all my diaries. Any one can see that the records were uncooked, as they contain some miserably small entries. Of course I might fish only for an hour, and yet give the reader the idea of a whole day's fishing. When a man starts, say, on a June morning, at dawn, and fishes till it is dark, and calls *that* "a day's fishing," I smile.

With no wish to detract from the

deserved fame of that very famous Scottish angler, and excellent angling-writer, whose praises I am ever ready to sing wherever the wet fly holds sway, one can hardly help being tickled at the quaint humour of the Aberdeenshire gamekeeper, who summed up Mr. Stewart's notion of "a day's fishing" in these words, "Ay! twenty-fowr hoors o' creepin' an' crawlin'!"

Seven to eight hours is nearer my idea of a good long day. I have made some of my best baskets of fish, when out for four or five hours, most of the trout being killed in one or two hours, every moment of which, however, meant incessant and energetic application.

So long as men are true to themselves, so long will they deal openly with others; and the man who in open water tells you of the abnormal length of his "day's fishing" in connection with any extra large basket of trout he may bring home, disarms criticism. I imagine that Stewart made no secret of such things. His reputation certainly did not necessitate any such feeble tactics.

I am aware that some good Scottish angling clubs have strict rules, and no gentleman would or could fish before or after

the stipulated time in such competitions; but all men are not gentlemen, and angling clubs are not all equally strict in carrying out their rules.

I recall, while fishing the Isla, at Glenisla, seeing the members of an angling club from Dundee, weighing at the hotel, one Saturday evening.

Some of them told me quite frankly, that they had begun fishing the night before! Some had fished "the Shee," others "the Isla," and *all* had used worm, live minnow, "fly," etc. It is true that they had fished only "*one* day," but when a man fishes all these hours and withholds the fact, while swaggering about his big baskets; I maintain that he is not a sportsman. The least that a man can do when he gets a more than usually large basket of trout thus, and speaks of it, is to add, "But, of course, I fished from sunrise to sunset!" and that, in June, means a very long day indeed.

May I add, with absolute truth, that my best baskets have been generally quite easy to make, so far as the skill went. What I mean by such a statement is simply this —the water was clear, and the weather "settled." Then the trout were "keen

as mustard," or "*fair daft.*" Add to this, energetic action, not a single moment wasted, while the trout were "on the job." Such things have as much to do with it as mere skill.

The days which cling to my memory now, are some during which I have had all my work cut out, and have only just managed to get a fairly good basket of trout—sometimes getting only a few large and shy trout. Anything out of the common, also, seems to remain in my memory, when the mere catching of many trout is practically forgotten. I will indicate the kind of thing I mean by "anything unusual," etc. And I am thankful to add that I can write freely about this, as it did not occur to myself, but to a better man. Many years ago I told the tale in the pages of the *Fishing Gazette.*

Many interesting letters followed, all of which are still preserved by me, in a scrap-book of rather large dimensions, much of it from my own pen. My old preceptor, "Mark Aitken," "fisherman" to the (*then*) Marquis of Lothian, was one of the very finest wet-fly experts I ever saw, and an absolutely reliable man. One day he was particularly anxious to get a good basket

of trout—I think to send up to the "Big Hoose" (Monteviot). He had fished some distance down the river Teviot, and was completely beaten. Naturally he grew anxious, for he did not like to report that he had caught no fish — probably for a dinner party. Jogging home disconsolate, he observed a few trout rising on the further side of a still pool, overhung by trees. Instantly, he saw a chance of retrieving his ill luck. He was using, as was his wont, but two flies, six feet apart. His tail fly was "woodcock and hare lug," dressed by himself, but with a single wing. Judging his distance, he put this fine fly over a rising trout, without result; another and yet another rising trout, were in their turn duly wooed, but were not won. I think I can see that patient, calm old face, as he was obliged to admit his defeat at the hand of his "slim" enemy. The trout kept feeding steadily, but would not take his flies.

In his despair, he waded right in amongst them, and discovered, to his surprise, that the trout were not rising at any fly, or flies, but, instead, upon small round seeds, which were occasionally showered upon the pool from some breeze-shaken boughs, overhanging

the river. And, I remember his saying, that he gave up all hope *then*, and waded ashore. It occurred to him, to remove the wing entirely; and then, with the nails of his forefinger and thumb, he plucked the hare's ear body, till, what with the tying silk, and the remaining hare's ear, it resembled a round knob, tied on a bare hook. He also removed "the dropper," and with no hope of any substantial success, once more set to work. It was, to him, truly a forlorn hope.

A good trout rose! This time, however, he secured the trout; and not only did he do so, but he filled his big black varnished creel nearly full—about 20 lbs. of trout! Would I had been there to see him at work. What a treat! Every cast would be in its place; no flurry, and no loss of time. Ah, when shall I ever see his like! He was a very experienced and clever fisherman, yet this was a wholly new experience; nor, so far as I am aware, did he ever have a repetition of it.

I have fished about fifty years, and I cannot remember, save once, observing trout feeding on seeds. This was on a pool called "Bedlam Home," on the Eden, in Cumberland, and just below Kirkoswald.

I may add that my statement was met by some doubters. I waited patiently, and soon had the corroborative evidence of several good anglers: for instance, Mr. William Fawcett (a member of the Horncastle Angling Association) wrote thus to the *Fishing Gazette*:—"Fishing in one of the chalk streams in the North of this County, in July last ('86), I caught a well-fed, handsome trout, of about ¾ of a lb. weight. On taking my fly out of its mouth, I was surprised to see the throat and mouth full of small round, but flat seeds," etc.

Another correspondent kindly directed my attention to the scientific side of the question, thus:—"In 'Loudon's Encyclopædia of Plants' he especially names as very greedily eaten by geese, ducks, and fish, *especially trout*, the seeds of the following plants. 'Name, Glyceria: Natural country, Britain: Locality, ponds:' (signed) Robert Roots, Hon. Secy., Portsmouth Waltonians."

Before I close this chapter on "River fishing with the wet fly," I should like to say a few words more.

I have attempted to condense into a few pages, not only the experiences, but the

memories, of a lifetime; and that, too, at a time when my memory is confessedly not what it used to be.

It will not fail to be noticed, in the three chapters on "Burns," "Waters," and "Rivers," that I have not gone on the plan of other angling writers. I have not, for instance, devoted several pages to teaching the beginner how to throw the line, *on paper*, because I think that such lessons are practically useless. Fancy teaching a young fellow, who was going to Australia, how to use "the stockwhip," by written directions!

I have seldom mentioned flies, gut lines, and so forth, in describing how to fish pool, stream, and quiet eddy. I shall deal with all these presently. Where I have mentioned a few flies—in the process of illustrating a lesson, and, I trust, thus making it not only less dry, but more interesting—the reader may be sure that I have named flies well worth taking a note of.

When we were small boys, my elder brother and myself were already keen fishermen. He died in 1874: but left behind him a small but capital little work, entitled, "Tod's Trout Fishing Guide to the Streams in the Isle of Man." It is

long ago out of print, but I have my own copy still. He dedicated it "To my only brother and a Brother Angler, whose Rod and Line are always his Best and Constant Companions"—a description which fitted me exactly, in those days.

Quite twenty years after the book was written; a friend of his, a great authority on yachting, and the President of the Isle of Man Angling Association (the late Mr. Sam J. Harris), edited and brought out, in a cheap form, my brother's small work.

Talking of throwing the fly: we were both, as lads, fond of going into the garden, rod in hand; and I feel convinced, that in no way can a beginner learn more quickly than by constant practice on a well-kept lawn, throwing at some definite mark, with unwearying patience and determination. When the river is exchanged for the lawn, he will *then* find out how much he had gained by hard practice; perchance, even as a man of formed habits, who has taken up fly-fishing somewhat late in life.

I practised what I preach.

The rest can only come, by degrees. I wish I could convince all young fly-fishermen to use light clubs daily, to develop

wrist-power, as I did till I could cast in the teeth of the wind quite easily. A strong wrist makes a delicate fly-fisherman.

This is a truism — which has its significance.

CHAPTER V.

A LIST OF STREAMS FISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

As I am about it, I think I may as well give a list of the various streams I have angled in since boyhood; and to simplify matters, I shall divide them into three: *A*, representing those quite familiar, old and tried friends; *B*, streams which I have a tolerable but not extensive knowledge of, or have only fished long ago and have lost touch with; and *C*, those that I have only fished from a day to a week, which, in my opinion, constitutes but a slight acquaintance. *AB* indicates, as in the case of the "Don," streams, once pretty familiar, but much forgotten now; and *BC*, streams even *less* familiar or well remembered.

SCOTLAND.

Aberdeenshire.—The Don, *AB*. Deveron, *A*; and Ugie, *B*. The Schoolhouse-Burn, *C* (in the "Cabrach" of the Deveron), which I fished with fly, once only. I killed 9 lbs. of trout that day.

Argyleshire.—The Orchy, *C.*

Berwickshire.—The Whitadder, *C.*

Buteshire.—(Isle of Arran) Glen Sannox Burn, *C*, fished only in boyhood.

Dumfriesshire.—The Esk, *B*, and Liddle, *C.*

Edinburghshire.—The Almond, *B* (now ruined). Gala, *C.* The Water of Leith, *C.* Gogar Burn, *C.* Carlops Burn, *B.* Ninemile Burn, *C*; and I must name the first burn I ever fished, the Braid Burn, in the outskirts of Edinburgh row. My father (only) had permission to fish with fly the Hermitage portion.

Fifeshire.—The Eden, *C.* Keneley Burn, *B.* Drill Burn, *B.*

Forfarshire.—The Upper Isla, *A*, at Glenisla at same place.

Haddingtonshire.—The Tyne, *C.*

Inverness-shire.—The Ness, *B* (at Inverness).

Lanarkshire.—The Clyde, *BC* (at Abington, and Lamington only, and when young; much forgotten now).

Peebleshire.—The Tweed, *AB*, and its tributaries, Manor Water, *AB*, and Glenrath Burn, *AB.* Eddlestone Water, *AB.* Leithen Water, *AB.* Quair Water, *BC*; and other burns, forgotten now.

Perthshire.—The Tay, *B.* The Tummel, *A.* The Dochart, *B.* The Lower Isla, *B*, and the Dean, *C* (at Meigle). The Gaur, *C*, and various burns. Innerhadden, *C*; Schoolhouse, *C*, etc., feeders of the Upper Tummel.

Roxburghshire.—The Tweed, *A*, and Teviot, *A.* Jed Water, *A.* Oxham Water, *A*, and Kale Water, *A.*

Sutherlandshire.—The Inchard, *BC.* The Navar, *A.* The Mallard, *BC.* Syre Burn, *BC.*

ENGLAND.

Cumberland.—The Eden, *A.*

Northumberland.—The Coquet, *C.*

Derbyshire.—The Dove, *B*, and Manifold, *C.*

Borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire.—The Ribble, *C.*

Sussex.—The Ouse, *B.*

Hampshire.—The Test, *C*, and Itchin, *C.*

ISLE OF MAN.

The "Doo," the "Glass," and some other smaller streams, now forgotten by the author in the lapse of years.

(*N.B.*—The junction of these two small rivers gives the name of "Douglas" to the capital.)

It is over forty years since I fished in the Isle of Man, in the company of my (late) elder brother, who was a capital fisherman, and who was the writer of the small yet valuable handbook already mentioned.

Through the courtesy of the late Mr. S. J. Harris, then the President of the Isle of Man Angling Club, I was elected an honorary member several years ago.

GERMANY.

THE BLACK FOREST.

River Wutach.

I have already mentioned this angling resort.

The head-quarters of the Bad Boll Fishing Club is a very comfortable hotel, with a lofty and spacious *Salle-à manger*.

I spent ten days there, in 1895, as the guest of my old friend B——n.

I had been very ill, and still was weak. Therefore I was not often on the war-path.

Notwithstanding this, I had a few excellent days' fishing notably one with my friend, at Achdorf Mill.

CHAPTER VI.

"THE ANGLER'S EQUIPMENT."

THE question of rods and tackle generally is not an enticing subject to me. One is so apt to drift into a sort of reproduction of the usual fishing-tackle maker's catalogue. Indeed, I was half inclined to think that the best thing would have been simply to select the catalogues of a few undeniably good fishing-tackle makers, recommend them to the angling world in general, and be done with the whole business.

This view, however, is not the one generally accepted, and so I am compelled to make a few remarks on rods and tackle generally.

There is a good deal to be said for cane-built rods, provided that the angler can afford to pay for the very best. A cheap split-cane rod is a thing to avoid; a good ordinary rod, made of wood, being twice as reliable.

Messrs. Hardy Brothers' cane-built rods are so well known, that to mention the subject at all without mentioning their names would seem to me to be quite impossible. The question of steel-centred or not steel-centred rods is one, however, which I am not prepared to go into.

I am inclined to favour a cane-built rod *without* the steel centre for wet-fly work.

For salmon-fishing I feel sure that steel-centred rods will kill "a fish" quicker, but I am dealing with trout-fishing, and that with the wet-fly, and I fail to see any real advantage in the steel centre.

Rods of well-seasoned and suitable wood have served me well, and I myself require none other. Messrs. Forrest & Sons, of Kelso, and of 24, Thomas Street, Grosvenor Square, London, have built rods for me since the year 1860, and I should be ungrateful and even unfair if I did not say, and say plainly, that I never wish to handle better rods. Indeed, all my rods have been made by that firm. They have stood the severest tests, the wood being well seasoned and all defective pieces most carefully excluded. The joints (the weak point in all cheap rods) never seem to give way. In fact, with fair usage, these rods last for a generation, if

not longer. They are as delicate as they are powerful—in good hands, of course. As for the "style" of a rod, every man seems to have his peculiar fancy. Stewart liked a stiff rod for wet-fly fishing, whilst some anglers like a rod of the Castle-Connell type. Others, again, prefer one which holds no sort of comparison with either of these rods. The rod which may suit A. may not necessarily suit B. Nothing that the rod-maker can do will ever get rid of one difficulty; namely, the personal element.

Messrs. Forrest & Sons some years ago paid me the compliment of naming "The Tod Rod," after one built by the firm, and with which I had done great execution. I like it myself immensely, but, unless it suits the hand of the fly-fisher, I am not so foolish as to think that it will prove acceptable. There are many other excellent rod-makers. I name Messrs. Turnbull & Co., of 60, Princes Street, Edinburgh, for one firm. Mr. Turnbull, senior, served his apprenticeship with old Mr. Forrest, of Kelso, and he who has been *his* apprentice, is quite sure to have been well and carefully trained. He was afterwards, for years, manager to my old friend, the late Mrs. Hogg, of Princes Street, Edinburgh, my

earliest rod-and-tackle purveyor, a person whom I held in very high esteem.

I have been kindly admitted to inspect the workshops of Messrs. Forrest & Sons, and also of Messrs. Turnbull & Co., and I can vouch for the fact that they are in a position (each of them) to turn out rods and flies to pattern, equal to those of any firm I am acquainted with. They are both thoroughly practical, experienced, and reliable men, and, for the rest, "Good wine needs no bush"!

Mr. Malloch, of Perth, is also an excellent fishing-rod and tackle maker, and of him it may be said that as a practical angler, "what he doesn't know is not worth knowing." I may add, that he is a stranger to me, save that I have corresponded with him occasionally on business matters, but to leave his name out would seem rather odd, since he is probably one of the very best all-round anglers in the whole of Scotland. On Loch Leven his angling feats are matters of history; and who does not know the Malloch Reel?

May I venture to add a word of general caution? It is, to the inexperienced angler, a very valuable word. Mr. Cotton-Walton is a very well-known trout-fisher, and has written a book; or, like myself, has written

oceans of current angling literature. Being in the habit of having his fishing-rods built by a certain maker, he naturally is in the custom of mentioning that maker's name, in connection with his sport. No good angler is such a fool as to continue using weapons made by any one rod-maker, for twenty, thirty, or forty years, unless he finds them serviceable and reliable. Now, observe how it works out. Mr. Tyro reads the book, or, it may be, the article. He then goes to Mr. Cotton-Walton's rod-maker and orders a rod; but he does so without even mentioning Mr. Cotton-Walton's name. What man of the world thinks it a likely thing that any rod-maker turns out all his rods to one pattern or "style." The thing is ridiculous on the face of it.

Mr. Tyro comes in, as a mere stranger, and begins turning over and trying rod after rod, till at last he "thinks" he has got one to his mind, is it in human nature for the salesman, however honest he may be, to say to him, "I think, sir, you have not made the wisest selection," and thus, perchance, miss the sale of a rod? I feel sure that the tired-out, though polite, fishing-tackle maker, is often very heartily sick of the whole wearisome business.

I think when one is, after many years of faithful adherence to his own rod-maker, recommending him to others, he should deposit his favourite rod, till a pattern in the rough is built, and registered. In this way alone can a satisfactory result be arrived at, and this, I may add, has been done in the case of "The Tod Rod," in Messrs. Forrests' catalogue. It gives an idea at once, of the style of weapon used and recommended by "Mr. Tod," which is an important matter to the would-be purchaser. There is another thing (and here I will have all the rod-makers with me!) —when a beginner has purchased a rod, he cannot be expected to use it properly at first, and he is very apt to hand it to *others*, in order to obtain their opinion. In time he gets so many, and, I may add, such contradictory opinions given to him, that at last he begins to hate the very sight of that rod! Accept a story from real life.

A young man, aged twenty-one, who was already able to throw a good line, hearing the fame of a local Scottish rod-maker in the county where he happened to be residing at the time, went to his shop one market-day, in the month of April, 1860. There he ordered a fly-rod. To his

dismay, he was calmly told that "he would have to wait his turn, as orders were already numerous, and could only be executed in rotation." This was a severe blow, as the trout-fishing season had commenced, and he, being young and keen, was "eager for the fray." Seeing his dilemma, the kind-hearted old rod-maker, taking up from a corner, an all but brand-new fly-rod, addressed the young man as follows: "Here is a rod which I made to order for a gentleman. He has returned it on my hands, saying that he does not fancy its action. If *you* like it, you can have it now."

The youth tried it, and, without hesitation, instantly closed with the offer. That youth (?) is now a grandfather, and is writing these lines; while he who sold me the rod, (old Mr. Forrest, the founder of the firm,) has long since joined the majority.

Mr. Stewart (the author of the "Practical Angler") considered that stiffness and lightness were the two great requisites in a fly-rod. In this I am, personally, unable to agree with Mr. Stewart, since I consider that a rod which is "as stiff as a poker" can never have much sweetness or delicacy in casting the fly, and is not at all a suitable style of rod, especially when 4X

or 5X drawn gut is used, and the trout run of large size. There can be little or no "give and take" in a very stiff rod.

One must remember that 4X and 5X, and indeed *all* "drawn" gut was wholly unknown in Mr. Stewart's day. Mr. Stewart is perfectly right when he says that a very weak, pliant rod, is useless for casting in the teeth of the wind, a thing which I myself seldom experience much difficulty in doing; for, although "The Tod Rod" is not built on such a model as Stewart loved, it possesses backbone, which means that it has good *driving-power*, whenever it is called upon. Nevertheless, it likewise possesses the delicacy, which is almost as essential. "The Tod Rod," I may explain, is made up thus. The butt and middle joints are of hickory, and the top of greenheart. *All greenheart* doubtless makes a splendid rod for salmon-fishing, but it has certain objections in a fly-rod used for trout-fishing, especially with very fine tackle. It is undeniably a heavy wood, and sometimes is liable to brittleness.

Last, but not least, it does not yield easily and gently to a plunging acrobatic trout, as hickory does. An old Scotch fisherman ("Will Tait") once described, in words

which I have never forgotten, such a rod. "They are owre 'steely' they greenheart rods." *Anglicé*, "They are too steel-like in their action." And, as I was using at the time a greenheart rod, built by an English maker, whilst "Will" stood looking on, I felt how exactly it conveyed to me the idea then uppermost in my mind, and as no word had ever done before. The length and weight of a rod must necessarily depend upon the power of the angler's wrist and forearm, as also, doubtless, upon his experience or non-experience as a fly-fisher.

The beginner, let me remark, should *never* begin with a rod which he cannot wield with ease to himself. If he does, he cannot expect to make rapid progress, nor will he get into a good style of fishing; for the man whose rod is too long and too heavy for his comfortable use, is continually scheming how he can ease his tired muscles, a thing which is quite fatal to good casting, and even more so to neat "striking." The "strike" should come from the angler's wrist, *never* from the arm. A man may have a powerful arm, yet possess a weak hand and wrist; but, whoever strikes with his arm, is certain to do it clumsily, and

will have a long list of casualties. Therefore, I repeat, let the beginner be content to begin with a shortish rod, light and therefore easily managed, of say 10 foot. In the course of time, when he feels equal to it, let him then purchase a rod of 11 foot, or even of 11½ foot, for the fishing of large rivers; but, whatever rod he may elect to use, he must be its master. If the rod masters *him*, he loses rather than gains by the heavier and longer weapon, seeing that he cannot use it to advantage.

Of late years, the racks and showcases of the fishing-tackle makers' shops exhibit some fly-rods which seem very unlike the rods which old Mrs. Hogg used to sell when I was a young man. Fly-rods *then* used to taper more or less gradually from the reel-fittings. Now it often appears to me as if the butt of the rod was getting cut down too much, leaving only sufficient substance for the grip and the reel-fittings: and then it jumps at once, into attenuated proportions. I have taken exception to greenheart because of its "steely" action; but, when this is the build of a rod (though the thinning-down of the butt, I grant, does bring the spring of the rod into the hand, and makes the rod necessarily lighter,

by reason of the wood which has been removed), just consider the practical effect, especially when you are using extra fine drawn gut, and a good-sized trout plunges and jiggers as he fights for his freedom.

When playing a large trout with one of the old rods (which I acknowledge were often far too thick in the butt) by putting the rod over your shoulder, you brought into play the delicate mechanism of the top and the upper portion of the middle joints. Nowadays, with these thin greenheart butts, this delicacy is much lost. One feels the trout give his "knock, knock," down to the very hand, at every plunge or kick; and I hold, that for greenheart rods to be cut down so severely in the butt, is a mistake. I do not question the casting powers of these attenuated greenheart rods, although I scout as absurd the idea that they cast a better line. I hold that a rod which possesses the requisite power, should likewise be delicate in its action, when a large trout is leaping about.

I will make my meaning clearer by relating a somewhat old story.

I had borrowed a very soft and pliable rod, and was fishing on the Teviot with

very fine though whole gut. I hooked a fresh-run grilse of 6 or 7 lbs., which bolted past me. I hooked him when fishing a rough stream *up*, and as he rushed past me, he made the most extraordinary somersaults that I ever saw a grilse make, in my life. To meet the danger, I at once ran down stream and got opposite to him. I then put the pliant rod, back over my shoulder, and observed how well it gave to every spring of the fish. It was not a powerful weapon, and for daily use I would not have accepted it at any price, but it saved the situation on that occasion.

In consequence of a recent correspondence in the pages of the *Fishing Gazette*, I am obliged to sandwich in a few lines on "light rods." I am loathe to touch upon the subject, as it is one upon which many good fellows and fly-fishers seem to be rather touchy about. I cannot see my way to agree with the extremists.

I admit, none the less, that there is much to be said in favour of light, easily handled, and well-balanced fly-rods, so long as the hobby is not driven to death.

Fly-rods, to satisfy me, must have *driving power plus delicacy*.

Given these two main features, I am

with the "light-rod" movement; provided that it be kept well in hand.

Whether I, personally, am with the movement or no, little matters. What really is of consequence is, whether these extra-light rods will be run after, in ten years' time, as much as they appear to be, at the present moment.

For the benefit of those who may fancy that they are doing a smart thing in purchasing a cheaper rod than their friends, and which looks almost as well, permit me, as an old fisherman, to say a few words. When rods are fashioned from wood (as all my own rods happen to be), the first thing a rod-maker should look to, after the wise selection of the various forms of timber used, is to make sure that his wood is thoroughly seasoned before a single rod is cut out of it. This being done, the next best thing is to select the pieces and commence the work. Grant me your attention now.

In planing down a rod; knots and other flaws are apt to discover themselves. Now, any rod-maker who is jealous of his reputation discards all doubtful, not to mention bad, pieces of wood. Thus it happens that nothing save picked and seasoned wood is

permitted to be used, in the manufacture of any rod bearing the name of a first-class maker.

Contrast this with the habit of the man who has got "to push a trade" by underselling his brother in the same line of business. Here it would not pay to pick the half-seasoned wood out of which cheap rods are so often fashioned. Knots and other defects are winked at, a good coat of varnish covers up everything, and who is the wiser? Cheap joints are equally open to criticism, perhaps even more so.

But I think I have said quite enough, to prove that a cheap rod is, more or less, a mere lottery. The man to employ, is he who charges a fair, honest, and remunerative price, and who is like the builder I have read of somewhere, "who put his conscience into every stone that he laid."

I have never regretted dealing with a firm which carries these principles into practice. Cane-built, otherwise split-cane rods, I have a limited knowledge of. I am able to say, however, that unless they are made with the greatest nicety and care, and the pieces fitted together with scientific exactness, and then glued together skilfully, they are nothing short of miserable frauds,

mere traps for the unwary, or the lover of bargains. You will find this cheap rubbish often advertised, but never will you hear any good fisherman singing their praises, save when he does so, by blessing them, backwards.

The rings which are most in favour at present are, I fancy, up-right and snake rings.

For myself, I confess that I see no reason for changing the old-fashioned ordinary rings and keepers. Indeed, I once had one of my own rods fitted with snake rings, and afterwards had them removed. Here again it is very much a matter of individual taste, and it is not one of overpowering importance. I own that long habit makes *me* somewhat conservative in such matters.

Now as to reel fittings: the double-brazed and slide-reel fittings, or "The Universal" are surely good enough for the most fastidious of men and of anglers.

Again, as to "Joints." The old-fashioned joints are still much used, which are tied together with thread, after the rod is put up. They have stood the test ever since I can remember anything, and are most serviceable.

Messrs. Hardy Brothers sell a patented joint named *The Lock-fast*, which I myself have used, and can speak of as a thoroughly serviceable invention. It does not, I think, add to the appearance of a rod, but is, notwithstanding, simple and effective, and is one of the best joints I have ever fished with.

The last rod which Mr. Forrest built for me was fitted with "suction" joints, and I have pleasure in stating that in my own hand, they have fulfilled all requirements.

No duffer of a rod-maker (and there are many such) can turn out suction joints satisfactorily.

With rods, as with joints, the best are invariably the cheapest in the end.

Messrs. Turnbull of 60, Princes Street, Edinburgh, whose names I have already mentioned (and who, probably, will not agree with half of what I have written), have also invented and patented a joint which appears to me so practical and useful, that I now attempt to give a description of it. It is named "Turnbull's Victoria Joint," and was invented by Mr. Turnbull, senior, himself.

At the very bottom of the upper joint

he has placed a T-shaped brass key, and corresponding to this, is what is equivalent to the key-hole, placed at the bottom of the socket of the ferrule, of the lower joint.

The joint is simply pushed home, until the key enters the key-hole, (the illustration is my own, but it will enable any one to understand the principle of the thing in a second, for it is as near as may be, on the plan of the key and the keyhole). Once home, the upper joint is twisted half a turn to the right, and, when it can go no further, the rod rings will be found exactly opposite to one another. It seems as strong as it is simple, and I can see no earthly reason why it should not last for many years.

I think it will be found in practice a very durable, and it certainly is an extremely neat, fixture, as no part of it shows externally.

Mr. Turnbull will, I am sure, be happy to explain it to any one who will call upon him, or he will forward his catalogue by post, which contains a sketch of the joint, and explains its working.

Having now explained the sort of rod which I myself prefer; the reel fittings, rod

joints, and rings; nothing seems left to write about save *the varnish.*

A good deal of scribbling, I consider, has been thrown away over the so-called flashing in the sun of a highly varnished rod, and the need for giving to rods a dull finish. I cannot say that I ever found any really first-rate fly-fisherman complain that he had failed to score because of the flashing of his rod, and I think it is somewhat of an armchair theory.

Did no one ever observe, when another angler is throwing a long line in a calm, bright, sunshiny day—especially a thick and heavy line—that if you happen to be standing at the proper angle, "the glare," as the line is being lifted off the water, has at times all the vividness of flash, of the heliograph itself? I saw it strikingly on one occasion while I was calmly sitting down, doing nothing in particular, and I thought how such a flash must scare the trout. But I reflected that, after all, it was not so absolutely certain that the trout would see it, simply because I, who happened to be seated at the angle of reflection, did. Fortunately, it is a thing not very often observed, and by the angler himself (so far as I am aware), *never.* I see

no harm in a dull finish to a fly-rod, which, if it be but a fad, is one on the right side.

The main point for fishermen to be particular about, is not to fish with the fly when the sun is shining on his back, throwing the shadow of his rod and his figure in front of him.

If a man remembers to avoid this, I do not think he need trouble, because his rod is highly varnished.

And now as to reels. Let me remark that I prefer gun-metal and brass-bronzed reels to all others. Vulcanite reels break, if they happen to fall upon a stone; and I know nothing to the advantage of aluminium, save lightness. There are many patented reels about: of which the "Moscrop," seems to be a good sample.

I do not desire a reel to be excessively light, since it helps to balance the rod, placed as it is *behind* the "grip," not in front of it, as of old: and I regard as unnecessary, many of the so-called improvements in reels. My own opinion is, that the very best quality of brass or gun-metal "check" reels with revolving plates, are hard to beat. To give them a fair chance, they should frequently be taken to pieces, the plate removed, the interior thoroughly

cleansed, and the spindle delicately oiled. If this is not done, the sand works its way in under the revolving plate, and will wear the reel out, long before its time.

How often does it occur that some angling friend will confide in you how frequently he gets "smashed up," especially when fishing a large and somewhat rapid river. Let us suppose a case! The angler is casting up stream, in the teeth of the breeze, and is using very fine-drawn gut. The force needed to cast the fine gut line necessitates the point of the rod often coming very near the water, and now and then, even touching it. As the line alights, a large trout seizes the fly and makes a wild dash for liberty. Then follows a heavy pull, with the inevitable smash. This is often put down to "bad luck," that flattering excuse for every loss under the sun, from bad investments down to broken gut casts (or "collars"). I boldly affirm that a considerable percentage of these losses are preventable, and not only is this so, but I hold that the *reel*, not the *rod*, is generally at fault.

Men will pay the greatest attention to the delicacy of the rod, who will use a reel just as it comes from the manufacturer's

hands, and bestow no more thought on it than would a little child.

Even when fishing with "whole gut," a reel that needs a hard pull to start it, is, believe me, a very frequent cause of preventable disasters. When one is using fine-drawn gut, the reel-line should "pay out" very easily indeed.

All that is required of the "check" upon a reel is to prevent overrunning.

The wiser plan to follow when getting a new "rig out" is, I think, the following:—

Have your reel-line put into the reel, while you are in the shop, and see how your reel works, *yourself*. Make perfectly sure that too much line is not foolishly crammed in. This is a danger in actual practice, for when a large trout is being wound in, he may make a bolt of it, just as the landing-net is being placed under him. If he does, and your reel chokes, down goes the point of the rod and "all is over but the shouting."

Therefore I advise the learner *strongly* not to crowd his reel. When you place the reel into the fittings, you will soon perceive how the new reel "pays out" the line.

If grudgingly, get your rod-maker to weaken the spring.

This "tip" is very well worth recording. He who will not take note of it, deserves to lose his largest trout.

I have frequently found men using a reel (originally an excellent one) so clogged by reason of neglect, dirt, and verdigris, that it was no wonder *they* frequently lost, and complained of losing, trout.

Let any one take a dozen reels, in daily use at a fishing club or inn, and if he does not find some one of them so stiff that it requires a small donkey-engine to haul the line out at all, I shall be pleasantly surprised. So long as a reel does not overrun (and the "ratchet" or "check" is there for that very purpose), it can hardly "pay out" too freely.

Lines (like reels) should also be of the best; for, indeed, "cheap and nasty" are many of the lines which are sold at the present day. There is one kind of prepared line which I simply dislike. If the line be suddenly bent back upon itself, or if it "kinks," the outer waterproof "cake" cracks, very much as does an ordinary composite candle.

Any dressing which has this defect is indeed faulty, and for wet-fly work is to be avoided. The best dressing, in my opinion,

is one which is thoroughly rubbed into, and incorporated with, the line itself.

When finished, it will have little or nothing of the "wax-taper-style-of-line" about it.

This is what I prefer for my own use.

Certain very carefully prepared lines are dressed under the air-pump. They are very costly, but whether they are proportionately good I cannot say, as I have never used one myself.

I am very favourably impressed with what I have heard and read of them.

I think that most men like to fish with a tapered line. Well, it has its advantages; but the thin portion is sometimes made very long, so that, when throwing a quite short line, you are rather handicapped, if you have to cast against the wind.

Knowing this, I often cut off one or two yards, from the extreme end. This I need hardly say, should be done with judgment.

As for silk-worm gut, and the gut collars that are made from it, I do not think I can do better than advise the learner to place himself unreservedly in the hands of any first-rate fishing-tackle maker, in order to insure getting reliable hanks of gut,

either as it comes from Spain, or, after it has been drawn through the machine.

In the early spring months, the very finest whole-gut, may at times be used. As a rule, I use drawn gut.

Three yards is the usual length of the fine fly casts, sold in the shops. I invariably add two, at times three, short links of whole-gut, tapered. I fancy that it casts better; and anyhow, I have adopted the custom for many long years. I am not very much taken with tapered reel-lines, and would quite as soon fish with a really good level line, if it be of a thickness suitable to the rod I am using.

I have no desire to preach this as a creed. Let me add that the novice should not begin with fine 4X or 5X drawn gut.

If he does, he will find it very hard to cast, and he will prove a very profitable customer to the fishing-tackle makers.

Let him begin with a cast made of whole gut, tapered down to medium drawn gut.

When he can make a clean cast with this, he can then increase the fineness of his gut collar. Rome was not built in a day, and the man who thinks he can learn

all that there is to know about fly-fishing in a few hours will find that he is mistaken.

It is quite astonishing what fine gut an expert can throw against the wind, provided that he has a strong wrist, and is free from rheumatism; for rheumatism makes the strongest wrist useless while the attack lasts: a thing that many an old fisherman finds out to his cost.

Fishing-Baskets.

They are broadly of two kinds, French and the English. I prefer the French, and I always use it. There are two great faults with all wicker fishing-baskets, and the first is this. If you are fishing in a very keen and drying wind and have only taken a few trout; still worse if you have caught but one or two very fine specimen fish, it is surely very aggravating to find them, at the end of the day, withered and robbed of their beautiful colours, the tail and the fins being especially ruined, and past all hope of setting up satisfactorily. To obviate all this, I many years ago, devised the following plan.

Just inside the creel, and near to the top, I take a piece of an ordinary penny cane, or,

as a substitute, a piece of split willow, (a length of zinc or copper-wire makes a good substitute.) The basket-maker now tacks this, at intervals, to the inside and near to the top of the fishing-basket itself. I now take my creel to a waterproof-maker and have an indiarubber cloth-lining or bag, cut carefully to pattern, till it fits exactly to the shape of the creel. The glazed surface of the rubber cloth is of course placed inside it and next to the fish. The top portion is doubled over in order to give strength, and several large-sized hooks, such as are used to fasten ladies sealskin jackets and other like garments, added. These hooks are firmly stitched on, but are also held in position by pieces of indiarubber cloth, smeared over by the solution usually employed, (pure indiarubber dissolved in naptha) when mending waders or waterproof coats. But the exact position must be obtained, *before* these hooks are fixed on at all. It is obtained thus.

The indiarubber lining is held inside the creel by the one hand, it being meanwhile marked carefully, by the other; and, if this is properly carried out, once the hooks are permanently fixed on the lining, not only will it be found *in situ*, but,

each individual hook will slip over the split-cane (or willow) support, exactly half-way between each spot where the split-cane support has been tacked on, by the basket-maker. It takes very little time to do, it must not be done in a slovenly manner. I have just said that I prefer French wicker baskets, since on these I can easily have sewn, by any saddler (or cobbler, for the matter of that,) the two simple brass rings, in which I sling my landing-net; and from one of which, I always land my trout, when I am wading, in the middle of a stream, or pool.

The reasons which prompted me to line my creel with an indiarubber bag in this way, were two: and the second is, that on any long angling holiday, the pressure of the large quantities of trout taken, day after day, forces the slime of the fish into the interstices of the wicker-work; where no amount of washing can effect its complete dislodgment.

In hot weather, the slime soon decomposes; and I have before now, entered a railway carriage (when off for a day's fishing) to find that my creel, attracted attention. Even the guard's van must have frequently become decidedly mal-odorous,

when I placed my creel therein, on some quiet line of railway. Really the smell, at times, was beyond a joke. Now, no such state of affairs need be possible; as the indiarubber lining is removed so easily by the servant, who washes it with a wet sponge, and dries it in the fresh air, hanging it *inside out*, on a fence or peg. A little "sanitas," or failing that, well diluted carbolic acid, keeps the bag perfectly sweet and wholesome. It is replaced in a couple of minutes.

You see, the basket needs no scrubbing, and, as a consequence, lasts twice as long.

I also carry, a removable inner lid, made by cementing together two pieces of indiarubber-cloth, so as to leave the glazed surface outside.

This is cut roughly, to the size and shape of the creel, and is placed over each trout, or over each fresh layer of trout; as they keep tumbling into the basket. The usual wicker-lid on all fishing-baskets, with its hole for passing the trout through, admits of sufficient ventilation for all purposes.

I have used this lining for many years; and my friend Mr. R. B. Marston, the editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, uses it constantly, and so do sundry other of my friends, some of whom swear by it.

For myself, I declare, with the greatest emphasis, that it has given me every satisfaction. Of course it increases the weight of the creel, by some ounces, and also the cost; but its advantages far outweigh any such drawbacks.

Looking over Messrs. Hardy Brothers' excellent catalogue, I find that they have taken up the idea of the indiarubber lining of the creel, which I am sure their patrons will appreciate.

Several years ago, I sent my fishing-basket to Mr. J. J. Hardy, that he might see the indiarubber lining: the rings in which I carry my landing-net, and "the Tod safety buckle." I allude to "the Houghton Creel;" of which, with its lid open, I am glad to see that a capital photograph is given, showing the lining, with its cane, willow, or any other support.

I regret that I am unable to add that I like new-fangled creels, which are fitted up with such a close resemblance to a lady's dressing-case, with trays and such-like things, to hold the flybook, the lunch, flask, pipe, etc. I prefer to carry a small bag over my other shoulder, in which I hold my lunch and my flybook.

I must say that I rather like the little

indiarubber bags, which are attached by straps to the outside and front of the creel. These are very handy, and are to be recommended accordingly, since they do not prevent the angler filling his creel with trout, if he happens to be in luck's way, which I trust he will often be.

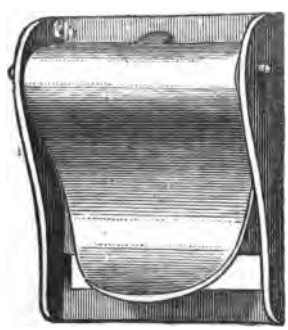
I am no faddist in fishing-gear, and, if I have invented a few things, I have proved them, up to the hilt, to be of real practical utility to myself, long before I have ventured to give them to the angling world. I may add that I have never patented an invention, and that any one is at liberty to make use of mine. It is always well to avoid rushing into print till one's invention has been tested — a thing young fishermen should remember.

For shoulder strap, the usual one made of leather and webbing is as good as anything I know. I need hardly add that I always use attached to it, my other invention, "Tod's safety buckle."

A description of my buckle appeared in the *Fisking Gazette*, many years ago, and also in the number for December 6, 1902, in the reprint of a paper which I read before the members of the Trout Anglers' Club, Edinburgh, in January of that year.

Therefore I shall not now explain it in detail.

Suffice to say, it is so constructed that, if the angler was to miss his footing in a flooded river, when his creel was full of trout, and he himself in danger of being drowned, he could get rid of his creel in a moment, without having to push the



MR. E. M. TOD'S BUCKLE FOR CREEL STRAP.

shoulder strap over his head at all. In fact, all he has to do is to pull a piece of brass, which liberates the strap and basket, almost as rapidly as the trigger of a rifle acts. If the wet-fly fisher, or his wife, does not think that this is a matter worth considering, I, who nearly came to grief on more than one occasion, am quite unable to agree with him, or her. Let me assure anglers that, having never profited in my

life by the sale of my inventions, I have no hesitation in recommending those who fish our Scottish rivers to use one of my "Safety" buckles, which are sold by Mr. Gillett, of Fetter Lane, London, E.C.

Flybooks and Boxes.

I have little inclination to enlarge upon this subject. Many years ago, I gave it a certain amount of consideration, and, acting upon my suggestions, Mr. Francis Walbran, of Leeds, brought out and christened "The Tod Flybook."

The book is covered with solid calf-leather, the cover pockets being also of leather. Instead of being fitted with parchment *leaves*, I had *pockets* of parchment used to interleave the whole book, which makes it extremely commodious. It has, moreover, got two most useful felt pads, instead of flannel or serge leaves, for holding droppers and other odds and ends. Of course, it has the usual places for scissors, etc. It is a serviceable and perfectly plain flybook; but whether it is for sale still, I do not really know.

There is one small and quite inexpensive fly and gut-cast carrier, which I advise every

wet-fly fisherman to purchase: I mean "Paley's Flypouch." Its cost is trifling, in comparison to its value. It takes up no room in the pocket, and yet it holds sufficient flies for a day's, or even for a week's, fishing. I recommend it as a good thing. In giving this piece of advice, I am very unlike that dear old gentleman, of bygone days, who remarked to a guest at his own table, "Try the sherry; my wine merchant says it is good. *I* recommend the port, *because I made it myself!*"

I am inclined to say, "Get a Tod Fly-book if you like, you will find it a good, useful article; but do not forget to purchase one of Paley's Flypouches." I have carried the handy little affair for many years, and I look on it as indispensable. Of inventing boxes to hold flies, there seems to be no limit; but these are chiefly, if not entirely, meant for holding eyed fly-hooks. Those who, as wet-fly fishermen, prefer the eyed hook, will find a bewildering assortment of little boxes sold for this purpose all over the kingdom. I myself possess a few, but they are of such a simple and practical character, that I can only say, like the old gentleman just mentioned, that I feel inclined to recommend them because

I made them myself. Pick out any little box which comes in your way, and line the bottom with a sheet of cork. Stick this into place by glue, and what better box does an ordinary fisherman require? I may add that Mr. Turnbull, of 60, Princes Street, Edinburgh, sells a book identical with the Tod flybook. I was surprised to find it only a few days ago, in his new, and handsome premises.

Landing-Nets, Etc.

For many years I have discarded all but the simplest and least expensive of landing-nets, as I find that I can do better work with them than with the more elaborate ones, using, as I always do, the "carrying-rings" and the "landing-rings" attached to my own creel, than which, in my humble opinion, no landing-net I have ever seen, works so rapidly and certainly, when one is fishing and wading in the middle of a river, as mine. Let me describe it.

It has a plain: thin rather than thick, steel or iron ring, without a single joint of any kind, furnished with a screw, to secure it to the landing-net handle. This handle is constructed of plain bamboo, with a brass

ferrule at each end, the top ferrule to take the screw of the net ring. I consider that the best nets are those that are tanned—provided only that they are made of thin and hard, rather than of loose and soft, cord; provided, also, that the knots themselves are tightly and closely pulled together, and are quite small. It is a great point to have small, hard knots, as the flyhooks do not stick into them so readily. Next to these are the prepared silk nets.

I attach my net to the ring, with copper or zinc wire, ribbing it regularly along till, at last, I have got the net hanging quite evenly all round the ring itself. It makes a very neat fastening. Long ago I discarded jointed folding rings as being unsuitable for my plan of carrying the net, and I have never regretted doing so. I do not expect all the world to adopt my method of landing trout in midstream, etc.

Let me now enter into a detailed description of the method I have alluded to.

I am, as I mention in the preface, much indebted to my friend Mr. Andrew Smith, W.S., President of the Trout Anglers' Club, Edinburgh, and who at one time (as a hobby) edited that excellent monthly the *Scots*

Angler (which is no longer published), for his courteous permission to reproduce an article which I contributed to that journal in May, 1897, the substance of which had already appeared in the columns of the *Fishing Gazette*, of which I am now such an old contributor. It may well be included in my book. I named the essay—

"How to land Trout expeditiously when wading.

"Nearly all landing-nets used when wading, are defective when in use. If my object was merely to invent a landing-net which was easy to carry, several of those in use fill that requirement better than my own. Let this point be clearly stated and understood, before I go any further.

"Nay, more; in rivers where all the fishing is done dryshod from the bank, I again say that some other landing-nets, with slings, etc., are preferable to my own.

"But when the river is one which demands wading, and *deep* wading—a river where to wade ashore with each trout is not only a loss of time, but a great disturbance of good water—then I know of no arrangement so good as the following.

"It has been also described in the *San Francisco Breeder and Sportsman*, the editor of which was delighted with it, for his own use. It is easily described when one can illustrate it by photographs, without which aids it is not quite so easy.

"My first idea was to avoid the confused condition so many get into when landing a trout in mid-water in the usual way.

"When the important moment arrives, the fisherman has at last got to free his landing-net from its sling, or whatever may be the method of carrying it; and now, having the net as well as the rod to manage, if the trout be large and makes a bolt for freedom, he is sadly hampered by reason of the landing-net being in his left hand; for, of course, he has got to use *both* hands in order to play a trout properly —one hand for his reel. Well, this is so evident that practical fishermen will at once see what I mean. But I have not finished yet. At last the trout is netted. What follows? The rod must be disposed of, and the landing-net then becomes a regular nuisance. You must tuck the handle under your left arm, and, hampered still with your rod, you have to kill

and basket the trout fettered by rod and landing-net the while.

"Now, I conceived a very simple plan remedying all this in 1877, I had a harness-ring sewn on my basket, and passed the landing-net handle through this, working my landing-net almost entirely from this ring. It did admirably; but I found that the handle was apt to get between my legs. By degrees I adopted three rings—two for 'carrying' the landing-net, and one for 'working' the net from, when I am wading; and, further, I now have a strap, which I find an invaluable auxiliary.

"There is a tendency for the ring and handle to become unscrewed, while one is carrying the landing-net attached to the basket; and I have often had to walk back half a mile or so, only to find my net and handle lying quite close to each other. To avoid all this, I first screw the ring of the net into the brass socket of the handle; and then, when it is firmly home, I have a hole drilled through both. My next step is to form a 'thread' for the reception of an ordinary screw-nail. This makes everything secure. You can thus fish for any length of time without any risk of the net becoming detached from the handle; and

when your trip is over, all that you have got to do is to remove the screw-nail, and to disjoint the ring from the handle, for convenience in travelling and in packing. And now for my plan of using the net when wading mid-stream—its chief advantage.

"If the water (and, as a consequence, the wading) is deep, and I have to use wading trousers, I place the net through the top ring—the 'landing ring,' as I have named it—A. But if the water is shallow, I place the handle of the net through the lower ring C for convenience of working it.

"Now there is a third, the large D-shaped saddler's ring B on the opposite side of the basket, near to the bottom, and yet close to the edge. This is meant for carrying the net-handle, which has, meanwhile, been thrust through the top at A. A glance at the sketch of the basket will suffice to make this quite clear. When fairly at work, and the trout are taking the fly well, time is too important a matter to admit of one's fumbling about, trying to find the ring at B (the D-shaped ring aforesaid, the carrying ring).

"Most anglers, I presume, are familiar with the coat-straps on the back of the

creel, to strap on the waterproof coat, or to hold, when travelling to one's fishing-ground, the wading stockings when going to or coming from the fishing-ground. Well, one day I was very busy amongst good, keen-rising trout; so I took off my creel, and loosely buckled the strap on the right side, leaving the one on my left unbuckled. The

BACK VIEW OF MR. TOD'S CREEL.

buckled strap thus formed a loose leathern loop, and, the landing-net handle being already through the upper or landing-ring A, I found it could very easily be tucked into this loop by the aid of the right hand; and that so quickly, too, that there was absolutely no loss of time.

"When trout are feeding hard and fast in April, who can overestimate the value

of utilizing, and making capital out of, every moment of the golden hour of 'the rise?' Nothing marks the duffer so much as waste of time during this brief but valuable hour. Again, there is the timid angler, who plays every good trout as if he was a salmon.

"It does not matter how good a line a man throws (many men who can throw a good-enough line are extremely poor fly-fishermen), such anglers will always be found wanting at the close of the day. Another man 'collars' his trout when they are rising freely.

"He does not mind if he loses a few, for others are soon hooked, and he who plays a bold game, fills his creel the fastest. Of course, I do not skull-drag a fish; for, to begin with, I use very fine-drawn gut; but once a trout has had his first rush or so, I endeavour to 'collar' him as soon as possible, and I lose very few trout in the process. So much for the value of time as a factor of importance, in filling the creel. And now to see how my system economizes time.

"Suppose I have waded into deep water, and have hooked a pound trout, I 'work' him till he is within a yard or so above me,

and then I quietly slide the landing-net out of the landing-ring with the left hand, lower it, and in one second, scoop that trout into the net, with a rapid twist of the hand, never—unless absolutely compelled to do so—taking the landing-net handle out of A or C, the landing-rings, when wading mid-stream. The trout is now in the net, and, quite as easily as a sword is returned to its scabbard, the left hand pushes the handle home, till the ring of the landing-net rests securely against the side of the creel.

"You can now tuck the rod into the top of one of the wading-stockings, allowing it to rest over the bend of the right arm, and, both hands being thus perfectly free, you can seize your trout and break its neck while it is in the landing-net. It is a dangerous game to play when the trout is out of the net, and it accounts for the loss of many a good fish. But, the fish once dead, the hook is readily removed, and the trout quickly creeled. The next moment you are casting over another rising fish.

"Surely this hint 'is better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick' to fellow-anglers. In my own hands it works perfectly, and very smoothly.

Photographed by Donovan, Brighton.]

E. M. TOD SLIDING THE LANDING-NET BACK WITH THE NEWLY CAUGHT TROUT.

NOTE.—*A mackerel was used.*

[*Photographed by Donovan, Brighton.*

THE LANDING-NET COMFORTABLY HANGING AGAINST FISHING-BASKET, BOTH HANDS BEING FREE TO UNHOOK THE TROUT.

It shows the process equally well.

[*To be placed between pages* 180 *and* 181.

"I once landed three half-pound trout (on the Cumberland Eden), one on each fly; and this when I dared not take a step, so fearfully slippery was the wading, and so strong the current. Yet I basketed all three, without moving an inch from the spot, to the delight of the keeper, who watched me the whole time, and waved his hat to cheer me, as he knew that I could hear nothing, wading in that turmoil of rushing water. And when I had all three safely in the creel, it was a veritable triumph of my system, for I was able to kill each trout (and basket it) quite easily and with certainty, and was (without a minute's delay) fishing again as if nothing had happened. Yet such was the wading, that I had to use a spike on my landing-net handle, and make quite sure of each foot being firmly planted, ere I dared to lift the other.

"I was not sorry to leave that place and go to a safer—but not till I had fished it thoroughly.

"It looks rather complicated on paper. In reality it is simplicity itself, and so inexpensive, that the poorest angler can rig his creel up with my rings and straps; in fact, the fishing-tackle shops look with but

little favour on this or on any invention, unless they can say to themselves, 'There is money in it.' If that is its only drawback, I trust that wet-fly fishermen will take my hints kindly, and find them of value. I have nothing to gain but their kindly appreciation."

CHAPTER VII.

CONCERNING FLIES.

THE study of Entomology taken up thoroughly is not only a fascinating one, but is of real value to the fly-fisherman. It ought to be no less so to the truly artistic fly-dresser.

Especially is it of value to the other school, whose fly is ever fished floating and kept dry; for I hold that, to the vision *of the trout*, the only eye which the fly-fisherman and the fly-dresser should endeavour to please, the appearance of an artificial fly, floating with its wings "cocked," and that of a wet fly, tumbled about "head over heels" underwater, can have little or no comparison. The colour of the body, in many of our artificial imitations, silk bodies in particular, is not always preserved, when the fly is thoroughly wet, as it is when absolutely dry.

This is one of the advantages of any non-porous substance for the body of flies,

such as quill and celluloid; but over and above these things, a fly, when sunk, must present to the trout's vision, a wholly different spectacle, to "the thing of beauty" which generally floats, with gauzy wings over his head. It reminds me of the "swell" of John Leech's period, as he sallied forth to the banqueting-hall, the dandy of dandies; with not a single pin out of place; and that same individual when he returns home, all "mops and brooms," his hair disordered, and his dress sopping wet, from walking home without his umbrella, in a downpour of rain.

I do not know how to express my convictions regarding entomological knowledge, in its relation to wet-fly fishing. Let me hasten to acknowledge that I make no claim whatever, to being an entomologist. I am, however, in excellent company, for how few of our best Scottish authorities have united the study of entomology with the practice of wet-fly fishing. In Scotland this is, in a very marked degree, the case, with some notable exceptions; and as Scotsmen are neither ignorant nor stupid, surely there must be some hidden reason for this. Shall I dig for its solution? Then, here goes! I think it is threefold.

First, that hitherto, we have had lots of trout-fishing without having had to study Entomology at all; second, that our rivers are rapid, and are not so well suited to the dry fly; and thirdly, that in England, there are a far greater number of leisured and wealthy fly-fishers, than there are in Scotland.

When I look around me, I feel sure that our best wet-fly fishermen in Scotland, are chiefly professional and business men, who have but little time or inclination for such additional studies; who take their annual holiday, fly-fishing; and, that over, have to take up, once more, the more serious affairs of life. Therefore, the man of leisure or the scientist, is the one to whom we all naturally look, for information upon such matters. But a man may be a very good fly-fisher and a poor entomologist, or he may be a good entomologist and an indifferent fly-fisher. The man who combines the two, and who also can fish *well* with wet-fly and dry-fly alike, is king of fishermen "for a' that."

It is a matter of sincere regret to me, that I did not study the science of entomology in my youth.

The first work I took up haphazard was

the "The Scientific Angler," by old David Foster, of Ashbourne, Derbyshire. Speaking of the "Olive Dun," he remarks that "It makes its first appearance in February, when it presents a dead, leaden colour, and is known as the 'Blue Dun.' A few weeks later, if the weather be genial, it is a shade lighter in the body, and is then termed the 'Cock-winged Dun.' By the beginning of April, it is of a general olive colour, with a yellow ribbed body. It is then known as the 'Yellow Dun' of April. In April, in the cold water close to springs or to the sources of streams, the fly appears of a light blue tint, and is designated the 'Pale Blue Dun,' and, in a few weeks later, the 'Blue Dun' of February appears as the 'Yellow Dun' of May. In cold weather, however, it appears as the 'Hares-Ear Dun.'"

The "Yellow Dun" continues to be plentiful through June, the action of the sun's rays rendering it lighter in the body. In July it is called the "Pale Evening White," and then, he goes on to add, that the weather causes the selfsame insect so to change its colour, that it is known now as the "Common Yellow Dun," and again as the "Golden Dun," and he affirms that

"all these varieties are the progeny of the Red Spinner."

Then I turn up a modern book of scientific interest and value, namely, "Dry-Fly Entomology," by a gentleman whose knowledge and information so well combines all that is scientific and practical in fly-fishing — the talented author of "The Book of the Dry Fly," Mr. F. M. Halford. Turning to page 158, I read as follows:—

"The patterns (numbers 25 to 29 inclusive), are imitations of the 'Blue Dun.' From time immemorial the existence of such a natural insect has been affirmed, and in the face of so much accumulated evidence, it must be included in the category of 'Imitations of Natural Insects.' It has never been my good fortune to find or procure a specimen, nor can I find among the list of British Ephemeridæ any corresponding to it in colour, etc. Two or three of my friends have sent me what they took to be individuals of the species, but they have, on examination, all proved to be sub-imagines of the 'Blue Dun' or of the 'Blue-winged Olive.'" I have quoted Mr. Halford's words *verbatim*. They are, I confess, a surprise to me.

"A Handbook of Angling," by "Ephemera" (of *Bell's Life in London*), published in 1847, was the next work I consulted. It is a charming book. I confess, however, to finding it rather difficult to understand what "Ephemera" means by the "Early Blue Dun." Does he mean the fly which is the subject of so much ink-slinging—the common "Blue Dun" —*the very existence of which Mr. Halford questions?* or does he mean the "Iron Blue"? Let us examine his own words.

"Of the true Dun ephemeral flies, the variety is equally endless, from the early 'Blue Dun,' which may be considered as the type, through all the gradations of 'Iron Blue,' 'Violet Blue,' 'Ashy Grey,' and 'Pale Blue.'"

Old David Foster must surely have felt that the "Iron Blue" was *at least occasionally* confounded with the common "Blue Dun," when he wrote these significant words—

"'The Iron Blue,' is a distinct species, and is not to be confounded with the 'Olive Dun,' which is double the size."

And further on he adds this important remark: "The metamorphosis of this fly 'the Iron Blue,' is the Jenny (or Jinney) Spinner."

"Francis Francis," in "A Book on Angling" (page 170), remarks, concerning the "Blue Dun," "It varies slightly in colour, according to the temperature and season. If the day be cold and bleak, it has a darker tinge than in warmer and more genial weather;" and he also remarks that "Ephemera," in his "March Flies," reproduces this fly under four different names, namely, "The Early Dark Dun," "The Olive Fly," "The Dark Hares-ear," and the "Hares-ear and Yellow." A little variety of shade is all the real difference that exists between them.

I now turn to that well-known standard work, "The Fly-Fisher's Entomology," by Alfred Ronalds, and I find (at page 62, under the head of the "Blue Dun") these remarks: "This fly lives for three or four days in the state represented, and then becomes the Red Spinner" and so on; he actually dismisses the "Blue Dun" in a dozen lines—a circumstance which completely staggers me, since it is one of the ephemeridæ most interesting to the scientist as well as the fisherman. Can he, like Mr. Halford, have had doubts regarding its existence? For he does not devote a word to its many transformations

and hues, in marked contrast to some other authorities, who dilate at length upon both. I need no better proof, surely, that I shall be acting wisely when, with the foregoing remarks, I leave the subject of entomology alone, and write simply as a practical wet-fly fisherman, of nearly fifty years' standing.

If I understand the position, reduced to actual practice, it comes to this—

The scientific Angler-Entomologist goes forth on his netting and dredging expeditions, and with infinite patience collects his delicate specimens.

These he takes home; no easy task, as so many die on the way, from a variety of causes—change of temperature for one, a thing I learned from a very interesting and instructive lantern-lecture, given at "The Trout Anglers Club," Edinburgh, a little time back. He verifies what he has gained by study, perchance detecting some errors, when pursuing his own original researches. Then he takes up his pen and writes a book about it all. And now "look upon this picture, and then on that!"

The wet-fly fisherman (what else could you expect of *him?*) reads his book, sucks his brains; and, picking up his scientific information quickly, straightway compresses

it into a small and handy compass, very easily carried about.

Then (the ingrate) when he next meets the angler-scientist at the river-side, what does he do, but use the very cudgel the latter had made so beautifully, *and breaks his head with it*; "*pour encourager les autres!*"

After all, is he not in the right of it when all is said? What seems to me to matter most, in a day's fly-fishing, is not so much the light of science thrown upon the structure, the development, and the habits of the various forms of insect-life upon which trout "live, move, and have their being," as to reduce this knowledge to practice, and to make it really helpful to the average fly-fisherman.

The angler should possess, at least, sufficient scientific information to enable him to recognize the flies as they appear in their various seasons, and to anticipate their advent with more or less accuracy.

Occasionally, in practice, he will find (as I have done), that he will have to unlearn all this; and to grasp the fact, the indisputable fact, that on certain days, we wet-fly fishermen, who use from two to three flies on the gut casting line, sometimes discover that the trout will have nothing

whatever to do with our closest imitations of the natural fly, then on the water.

I have frequently observed them going for a "dropper" wholly unlike the fly which was "*up*" at the time; and to this hour I am unable to account for their preference, on such occasions. It will, therefore, be in keeping with the plan of my book, if I give the names of the artificial flies, and their various dressings, without troubling much as to what "order," "family," "genus," or "species" they belong, or are supposed to represent.

I have seen (in skilled hands, of course) flies doing deadly execution, the dressing of which was so rustic (save that they were very lightly feathered, a most important point in the wet-fly) that, to adapt the well-known words of Hamlet when addressing the players—"You would have thought some of Nature's (or Art's) journeymen had made them, and not made them well, they imitated the Ephemeridæ so abominably."

Looking back upon my life as a wet-fly fisherman, shall I venture to affirm that I should have made heavier baskets of trout had I been a more scientific angler? I answer, "yes" and "no." "No" when in the early spring (April and in the first half

of May) trout at times "gang fair daft" for an hour, or perhaps two at most, during the entire day; but "yes," when the conditions are such as all experienced fly-fishermen will understand, without explanation; when trout are not rising fast and furious, but where only a few large, well-fed trout are feeding, one here, and another there, and are sucking diligently down some tiny insect, such as the Blue Dun, in one or other of its forms, when the waters are low, the wind but a slight zephyr, and the skies bright with snow-white, cumulus clouds.

At such times, I feel that one cannot know too much of nature, so as to apply it advantageously to our art, the art of fishing under difficulties, with the wet-fly.

I am of opinion that to use three flies is a mistake and a delusion, on such *very* critical occasions as these. It is not merely sufficient to have the correct fly—though that is wisdom: it then becomes prudent to remove at least the middle bob-fly or dropper, keeping the other two flies quite six feet apart. And if the trout are more than usually shy and difficult of capture, a single fly is best.

I cannot recall any wet-fly angling

authority who has even mentioned my next point.

Suppose, upon a bright May or June day, when the Iron-blue Dun figures on the *menu*; an old, large, wary trout, is observed close to the surface, feeding upon these delicate morsels.

The fisherman is wading below, and his first cast brings the middle fly, right in front of the trout's nose. What is the result? That old "fox" sees that the centre fly is supported by one on either side, and his suspicions are instantly roused. He looks again. He screws his eye-glass in tight for a still better look. The three flies then look what they are—confounded shams—when viewed against that bank of white clouds.

Do you wonder that he languidly remarks under his breath, "Oh! this is 'coming it too thick,' you know; what do these fellows take me for?" And, as he scuttles off, all that is left of that ancient fish-torpedo, is the wave which his retreating form leaves on the placid surface of the pool.

Again, suppose you have removed all but the tail fly; and that you send this, with unerring accuracy, close to his blunt nose; what is the use of all your skill, if he sees 4 or 6 inches of gut before his

vision is enraptured by that fly of yours with the sting in its tail? Now, this is how I personally should like to be able to present my fly to that trout. It is rather unique, but somewhat difficult of attainment. Wading below, but well to one side or other of the fish itself, I should like to be able, *at will*, to cause the last 18 or 24 inches of gut, to curve back upon itself, so that the fly would point directly *at* the wary old trout; and if that would not take the fellow in, I do not know what would. Some angler may see in this advice, a proof of the superiority of fishing down-stream with the fly; but that is altogether another matter. No, sir! you forget that a trout always lies with his head up-stream, so that to "stalk" him skilfully, it is necessary to get behind him: that is, to fish from below, never from above the trout, if you can avoid it.

There is a quaint old Scottish proverb, germane to the point, which runs thus: "If you want to take advantage either of man or beast, aye get to the blind side o' him."

And I have continually felt that our failures, when our best efforts are directed towards some very desirable trout, are often

due to the presence of that tell-tale thread of gut, which, however fine, remember, is never strictly invisible; and that our success much depends on our being able to make the fly alight softly, about six inches above the said trout, to float down naturally towards him, without the slightest drag; but also without any possibility of *the gut* being visible, before the fly itself comes into view.

If I am right (and I think I am), it would be highly diverting to know how often, when the fisherman has been throwing his fly perfectly, and could get no sign of life out of some tantalizing old trout, a puff of wind, doubling back, in a curve, about 18 inches of the extreme end of the gut casting-line, has, accidentally, placed the fly "just right," with the desired practical result. I commend these words to the careful consideration of all wet-fly and other fishers.

I have elsewhere directed the reader's attention to another possible cause of failure. I mean the presence of the air-bubbles, which at times seem to cling to certain artificial flies, especially when they are newly put on. To other flies they scarcely seem to cling at all, as the feathers apparently

become soaked, almost as soon as they are immersed in the water.

I merely mention the fact, having myself tried the very simple experiment by placing the flies in a tumbler of cold spring water, which I placed in the bright sunshine, or, still better, in the strong white light of an incandescent Welsbach burner.

Let any unprejudiced observer note the singular appearance presented by diving birds when they are being fed, as I have so often seen them, in the Brighton Aquarium; and he will observe that their feathers, as they dive to the bottom of the tank, time after time, are frequently quite luminous, and sparkle like the dew on a grass lawn, in a bright spring morning. Sometimes it seems as if the whole side of the bird was coated by a glittering substance, and this, too, despite the bird's vigorous exertions; and I think that sufficient notice has not been taken of this, by wet-fly fishermen.

I will, doubtless, make many an old fisherman "cock his eye" when I say that, when I am fishing any Scottish river while it is low, and the water clear as crystal; when, moreover, only the very lightest air stirs the pools: I not unfrequently remove a

good deal from the wings and hackle of the fly; nor is this all.

I soak the fly in the water, and, while it is thoroughly wet, I, as previously mentioned, deliberately rub the wings together between my forefinger and thumb, until I have mixed up the fibres, and in this way, doubtless, have got rid of much of their natural oil. The fly *then* sinks readily, and seldom, indeed, have I found it other than a successful ruse under these exceptional conditions.

I ask other fishermen to give it an honest trial; especially when they are using a single or double-hooked midge fly, during a drought.

It sometimes seems to act like a charm, turning seeming defeat into victory.

I wish, further, to state my decided opinion concerning the way in which all winged flies for our particular use ought not to be "dressed," and the kind of broad lines upon which they should not be modelled.

I am quite well aware that here I am going out of my way to court criticism; but, strong in my conviction, I do not shrink from the critic's pen, believing, as I firmly do, that my contentions in the main, will be upheld, in the end.

What a wet fly ought *not* to be.

It should not be dressed heavily, with stiff, solid, and too formal wings. If each wing is double, still more objectionable is the fly. It should not be too heavily hackled, or too full-bodied. Finally, it should not have much tinsel; since there, in a nutshell, you have the kind of fly I would rather run a mile from, than fish a minute with.

Consequently; the wings should be spare, the hackle likewise; the body of the fly thin, rather than stout; and tinsel; if it be employed at all, always used very sparingly.

N.B.—The wings of a fly should never be longer than the hook. I go further, and assure the reader that, for forty-five years, I have appreciated the value of a wet fly dressed with only one wing, tied in a bunch, and placed upright.

The softer the feathers, of which both the wings and hackle are composed, and, consequently, the more the individual movement the fibres are capable of, as the fly is making its way quietly down stream, the more attractive and killing is that artificial wet fly.

I have seldom dressed river-trout flies

in any other way; I see no harm in two wings if they are only *thin* enough. As I have generally held my own, I can venture to speak confidently in favour of the single wing.

The idea was not mine.

I copied it from my old preceptor, Mark Aitken, who, I consider, was head and shoulders my superior, as a wet-fly fisherman. He was, indeed, *facile princeps*. It is about forty years since he died, and I may truly say that, as a wet-fly fisher, I have never seen his better. Peace to his ashes!

I must now deal with the artificial fly itself, but from the wet-fly fisher's point of view exclusively. To begin at the beginning: one cannot do wrong to deal first with the hook upon which the imitation is dressed.

Since the days of Stewart, up till now, I consider that better or more reliable hooks are not made for wet-fly fishing than are the ordinary round-bend, blue-steel hooks made by Messrs. Hutchinson & Sons of Kendal. Next to these, I am inclined to place the "sneck-bend." I wish it to be clearly understood, however, that my choice in no way implies the

smallest slur upon the hooks of other makers. It amounts simply to this: I have found these hooks stand the test of time, and, consequently, I believe in them.

I prefer hooks tied to gut — "blind hooks," in fact, to eyed hooks.

I have a strong prejudice against black japanned hooks, for delicate wet-fly work.

Let any one hold a japanned flyhook between him and a bright (or any) sky, and he will need no further argument to convince him, that a black hook, is more glaringly visible, than either blue or bronzed steel.

I now approach a subject of universal importance to anglers, namely, the present numbering of hooks by their respective makers, and the urgent need there is for reform in this respect.

I have always vowed that, if ever I wrote a book on fly-fishing, there was one subject I should not fail to bring prominently forward — the one I have now taken in hand. I am not going to cover an acre of writing-paper with my remarks, all the same.

But what I have got to say let me say firmly; namely, that the present Babel-like confusion should be, by universal consent, put a stop to, and in its place, *order*, and

an *International*, i.e. *universal scale of hooks* substituted.

I quite appreciate how delicate and difficult a matter I am urging upon the attention of the angling community.

Further, that conflicting interests, selfish indifference, conservative prejudices, and, perhaps, a certain amount of laziness, will each have to be met—and overcome.

This confusion cannot go on indefinitely.

How could it be possible to tolerate it for all time to come? If it has to be done, kindly remember that one "Now" is worth a bushel of "to-morrows." Besides, it is enormously in the interests of angler and fishing-tackle dealer alike.

Just think, for one moment, how it operates in daily life; and if, after what I am about to say, the angling fraternity still prefers to sit down "and let things take their course," I shall feel at least that I have tried to do my best in the matter.

My contention amounts to a conviction.

It is that our hooks should be so numbered that, when a sportsman cables from Canada or New Zealand an urgent order for flies, stating the size of hook required, his order should not, by any possibility, be liable to be misunderstood. At present is

it an easy thing to know, with absolute certainty, what is wanted, so that the fishing-tackle maker can proceed with the order, perfectly certain that the right size of hook will eventually reach their distant customer? I say that it is *not*.

Take, per example, the scale of two well-known old firms—Messrs. Hutchinson & Sons' Limerick-bend hooks, and then take Messrs. Bartleet & Son's Limerick-bend hooks.

Observe that No. 1 of Messrs. Hutchinson & Sons' "make" is the smallest trout-fly on their advertised scale of sizes, whereas the same number in Bartleet & Son's scale of sizes, is a salmon hook, which measures 1¼ inches in length.

With such a state of affairs staring us in the face, the possibility of serious error at any moment, is only too obvious.

Again, and yet again, I say that the world is too progressive to permit such a stupid state of things to remain for ever.

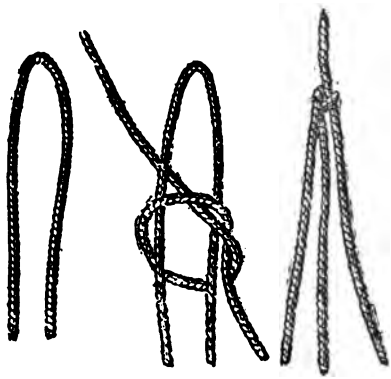
Surely I shall have every one with me, when I point out that few things in an angler's pleasant and placid life are more aggravating than when, on an angling holiday, an urgent letter or "wire" to a

fishing-tackle maker for a fresh supply of a particular fly, much in request at the moment, results in a fiasco such as I have already foreshadowed. But, when it comes to an important order from a far country, and that order gets misunderstood, because, forsooth, the angler merely failed to wire the particular maker or inventor's name, or "scale of hook," such as Bartleet, Hutchinson, Pennell, etc., the result of such an error, may mean nothing short of ruin to a fishing-trip, and the loss of much time, temper, and money into the bargain.

I have not touched upon the "eyed" fly, of course, because I generally use "blind" hooks—that is, hooks attached to gut for wet-fly work.

Many years ago, I invented a plan whereby the fly plays, not merely on one slender thread of 4X gut, but on three strands of gut. I do not propose, however, to take up time in describing it in detail. It has been already described, in the pages of the *Fishing Gazette* and elsewhere. In my own hands, it does admirably, so long as I dress the fly myself, or have it dressed with exceeding carefulness. But fishing-tackle makers and fly-dressers "canna be fashed with such new-fangled inventions;"

and, recognizing this fact, I think I shall do well to say no more upon the subject. Here is the idea.



MR. E. M. TOD'S TRIPLE GUT HINGE, FOR FLIES.

Last upon my list, are the deadly little double-hooked midge-flies, so well tied by Messrs. Forrest & Sons, of Kelso and London, and also by Messrs. Turnbull & Co., of 60, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Two round-bend hooks ("Hutchinson's," size 00) are simply tied together, side by side, in the ordinary process of dressing the fly itself.

When the fly is about to be used, the two hooks must be opened out, by means of the finger or thumb nails, till they are at an angle slightly greater than that of

an ordinary salmon fly, when dressed on double, "brazed" hooks.

There is absolutely no question of the value of these tiny "doubles," when used with judgment and skill.

My friend, Mr. R. B. Marston, editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, acting on hints given by me in some wet-fly articles in his valuable paper, could a tale unfold regarding their value amongst abnormally shy trout. Alas, his modesty will probably keep him silent.

While I was resident in England, where I have spent nearly thirty years of my life, one way and another, Mr. John Forrest, fishing-tackle maker, of 24, Thomas Street, Grosvenor Square, London, W., in writing to me, once remarked that he was beginning to sell these "doubles" very well, even in the south. But, he added, that English customers had expressed the wish that they could be also had, as eyed hooks.

Now, such tiny delicate hooks brazed together, would prove in actual practice, a complete failure, for reasons too many to explain *in extenso.*

His letter set me thinking, and I sent him up a very simple little invention to meet the needs of these eyed-fly fishermen.

It consists of one eyed hook whipped to an ordinary "blind" hook of the same size, and Mr. Forrest took to it at once. When finished, the flies look, what they really are; quite a little success.

Above all things, these small "doubles" must be movable, else, when one of the hooks gets fixed in the upper jaw and the other hook in the lower jaw, they would frequently snap. As they are held together, however, only by the silk thread, there is a great deal of "give and take;" and this saves the situation. I seldom find them break.

Before I close this paper, I wish to add, in connection with the appeal which I have just made for a universal numbering of hooks: another much-needed Reform.

I allude to the different dressings (and each one different) confidently given as "the correct pattern" of any of the natural flies.

This opens up rather a large field for speculation. Many men, as has been proved, are quite colour-blind; whilst even more are partially so. Again, men may be able to recognize all the primary colours—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, etc., who would be wholly at sea if examined upon

the gradations with which chemistry has of late years made us all so familiar.

I suggest that this fact has possibly got something to do with the many and varied hues which are occasionally given to the "body," "wings," or "legs," of the various artificial imitations of any one fly.

But it does not stop here. It goes much further than this; and I think that the day is not very far off—and the sooner it comes the better—when fly-dressers will be compelled to possess more than a mere rule-of-thumb knowledge, so as to direct their beautiful operations with something approaching to scientific accuracy. Those, in particular, who dress "floating" flies ought to be obliged to pass a judiciously restricted examination in entomology, before they are considered recognized experts, capable of imitating with precision, the natural ephemeridæ.

How to set about such a reform, I really do not know. It seems a problem far more difficult to bring to a practical solution, than the renumbering of the hooks upon which our artificial imitations are dressed. In fact, it seems to be simply honeycombed with difficulties. As a matter of course, the candidate would be tested as to colour-

blindness—which, I imagine, is a comparatively simple matter, in the hands of a specialist.

I prophecy that *these* are the directions in which Progress will make her inevitable advances, in the near or distant future.

TABLE I.

SOME USEFUL WINGED FLIES FOR WET-FLY FISHING, AND HOW THEY ARE DRESSED.

I. GREENWELL'S GLORY.

Body.—The yellow tying silk, waxed with cobbler's wax, to impart to the body a greenish-yellow hue. This is ribbed over with yellow gimp, or finest gold wire.

Hackle.—Coch-y-Bonddhu.

Wings.—Blackbird, tied in a bunch, and split.

Season.—April, May, June, and September; in fact, it is the most valuable and generally useful of all the wet flies known to the author, who obtained the pattern direct from the Rev. Canon Greenwell himself, so that it is *authentic.*

II. MARCH BROWN.

(MALE AND FEMALE.)

Male.

Body.—Hare's ear, ribbed with yellow gimp.
Tail.—Two strands of mallard feather.
Hackle.—Dark partridge feather.
Wings.—Taken from the tail of the pheasant.
Season.—April.

Female.

Body.—Light fur of hare's ear, ribbed with yellow gimp.
Tail.—Two strands of cock's hackle.
Hackle.—A red hen's hackle.
Season.—April chiefly.

III. RED SPINNER.

Body.—Reddish-brown silk, ribbed with yellow gimp.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen's hackle.
Wings.—Taken from the wing of the mallard.
Season.—April and May.

IV. THE COW-DUNG FLY.

Body.—Olive-green wool.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen's hackle.
Wings.—From the snipe.
Season.—April and May.

V. THE BLUE DUN.

Body.—From the fur of a rat, ribbed with silver gimp or wire.
Tail.—Two strands of dun hackle.
Hackle.—Blue-dun hen hackle.
Wings.—From the snipe.
Season.—March, April, and May.

This is the pattern generally used in Scotland, and pretty nearly resembles the natural insect when it first makes its appearance.

VI. THE OLIVE DUN.

Body.—Pale yellowish-olive floss-silk, or a quill dyed the same colour.

Tail.—Two rabbit's whiskers.

Hackle.—Stained olive.

Wings.—Taken from the wing of the starling.

Season.—April and May.

This fly is by entomologists said to be identical with the Blue Dun, and only a later gradation of that fly.

VII. THE YELLOW DUN.

Body.—Lemon-coloured silk, waxed with cobbler's wax, and then untwisted so as to show alternate dark and light ribbing.

Hackle.—Stained olive.

Wings.—From a young starling's quill-feather.

Season.—May and June.

This is Jackson's dressing, which Mr. Walbran seems to have copied in his good little book, "The British Angler." It is only one more gradation of the Blue Dun.

VIII. THE IRON BLUE.

Body.—Mole's fur, spun on with reddish-brown silk.

Tail.—Two strands of Yellow Dun hackle.

Hackle.—Small Yellow Dun hackle.

Wings.—From the breast of the water-hen; some prefer *the tail of the tomtit.*

Season.—April and May.

This, on the whole, is the best dressing I know.

IX. THE QUILL-GNAT.

Body.—Dark peacock quill from moon-feather of peacock.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—A red hen's hackle.
Wings.—Snipe.
Season.—April, May, and June.
This is a grand fly on the Deveron and Tummel, and is Mr. Forrest's own pattern, from which he has always dressed the fly for me.

X. THE GINGER QUILL.

Body.—Quill from moon-feather of peacock.
Tail.—Two strands of red cock's hackle.
Hackle.—Ginger-coloured hen's hackle.
Wings.—From starling's wing.
Season.—May and June.
I found it an excellent fly on the Deveron and elsewhere.

XI. THE SAND-FLY, OR "GRAVEL-BED."

Body.—Reddish fur from a hare's neck, ribbed with brown silk.
Hackle.—Ginger hen's hackle.
Wings.—From the ruddy mottled feather inside of the hen pheasant's wing. Some authorities dress it with corn-crake wing.
Season.—April and May.
This is Jackson's dressing of the fly.

XII. "WOODCOCK AND HARE'S-EAR."

Body.—Dubbed from the speckled grey part of a hare's ear, picked out with a needle so as to form the legs of the fly.

Tail.—Two strands of mallard wing.

Wings.—Inside of woodcock wing-feather.

Season.—April and May. A generally useful fly.

N.B.—The "Woodcock Wing," dressed with the body of "Greenwell's Glory," is a very killing fly, but must never be named "Greenwell's Glory." The same wing is not unfrequently dressed with black or red hen hackle. It is regarded as a good all-round fly for Scotch rivers and "waters."

XIII. BLACK-GNAT.

Body.—Black silk.

Tail.—Two strands from black hen's hackle.

Hackle.—Small black hen's hackle.

Wings.—From the wing feather of the starling.

Season.—April, May, and June.

Jackson gives the dressing of this fly. Mr. Forrest, I see, *almost* repeats his dressing. It is a capital fly for border rivers.

XIV. YELLOW SALLY.

Body.—Pale yellow silk.

Tail.—Strands of dun hackle.

Hackle.—Olive or buff-coloured hen hackle.

Wings.—Pale yellow dyed starling feathers.

Season.—May and June.

Many years ago, on the Tummel, I found that a "Yellow Wing" was not taken so well as the buff colour to be found on the inside of a fieldfare's wing.

Fieldfare is a fly of my own dressing, which is worth a trial when the "Yellow Sally" is about.

XV. GRANNOM.

Body.—The light fur from a hare's face or ear, tipped with green silk.

Hackle.—A ginger hen's hackle.

Wings.—Taken from the partridge wing, and made rather full.

Season.—April and May.

I give the dressing of this fly because it is a favourite well known. I very seldom use it myself.

XVI. THE RED QUILL.

Body.—Quill dyed in Crawshy's No. 9 dye (see Mr. Halford's work, "Floating Flies, and how to dress them").

Tail.—Two strands of game-cock's hackle.

Hackle.—Red game-cock's hackle-feather.

Wings.—Starling, but somewhat pale.

Season.—May and June.

Mr. Walbran's dressing. I found it a favourite at Bad Boll, when fishing the Wutach.

XVII. AUGUST BROWN.

Body.—Of brown floss-silk, which must be ribbed *distinctly* with yellow silk thread.

Tail.—Two rabbit's whiskers.

Hackle.—Red hackle stained brown.

Wings.—Feather from a brown hen's wing.

Season.—August and September.

This is a good September fly in Scotland, and is recommended by the authors of "How to catch Trout," by Three Anglers.

XVIII. THE PARTRIDGE TAIL, OR "FROG-HOPPER."

Body.—Yellow tying silk.

Hackle.—Hen's hackle light ginger.

Wings.—The mottled feather from the tail of the partridge.

Season.—June.

A good fly on the Clyde, and given by Webster in his book, "The Angler and the Loop Rod."

XIX. THE TOD-FLY.

Body.—Striped quill from the moon-feather of the peacock, not dyed.

Tail.—Two strands of game-cock's hackle.

Hackle.—The soft and somewhat light mottled feather taken from the inside of the wing of the woodcock.

Wings.—Mavis wing, inside of feather.

Season.—I look upon it as a good, generally useful fly, and an excellent companion to Greenwell's Glory, to which it forms a nice contrast.

TABLE II.

Acting upon second thoughts, I have felt it desirable to change my plan, giving four tables of artificial flies instead of three, as I had originally intended.

Before doing so, I desire to record my sincere indebtedness to Mr. George Forrest, of Kelso, as well as to his sons, for so kindly and readily sending me the dressings of the various flies I asked them to furnish me with. I am also much indebted to Mr. Turnbull, of 60, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

The following patterns, with a detailed description of each, Messrs. Forrest & Sons have supplied, in the kindest and most obliging manner.

I. HOFLANDS' FANCY.

(An Old Favourite on the Tweed.)

Body.—Light claret floss silk.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen hackle.
Wings.—From the inside of the woodcock wing feather.

Hoflands' Own Dressing of the Fly.

Body.—Reddish dark brown silk.
Tail.—Two or three strands of a red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hackle.
Wings.—Woodcock's tail.

II. PATERSON'S FAVOURITE.

Body.—Brown tying silk, dubbed with the fur of the water-rat.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen's hackle.
Wings.—From the quill feather of the water-hen.

III. OAK FLY (OR DOWN-LOOKER).

Before I give the dressing of this fly, I desire to make a few observations thereon.

The first pattern which I ever remember having in my fly-book, I got a good many years ago from Messrs. Carter & Peek, of London. It had a straw-coloured silk body, and has occasionally done good work. During a few days on the Cumberland Eden, the trout took it so well as a dropper, that I placed a second on my cast, to my very great advantage. I find it in the stock-book of Messrs. Turnbull & Co. dressed in this way. Now, Mr. Forrest gives it with the *orange* silk body. It would seem as if he had good authority for so doing, since he is supported by Francis Francis, whose book was published in 1867, and also by Ronalds, in 1832. I confess that I prefer the body to be straw-coloured, as given by Messrs. Carter & Peek, and Messrs. Turnbull & Co. And now I shall give Mr. Forrest's dressing of the fly, which would seem more like the insect.

Body.—Orange floss silk.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Cock-y-bonddhu hackle.
Wings.—Woodcock, wing feather.

IV. DIGBY CALEY.

(A Good Spring Pattern on the Tweed.)

Body.—One-third of yellow wool to two-thirds of rat fur intermixed, and ribbed with yellow tying silk.
Tail.—Two strands of olive dun hackle.
Wings.—From the hen pheasant.
Hackle.—Blue dun hen hackle.

V. THE PROFESSOR.

Body.—Yellow silk ribbed with brown tying silk.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen hackle.
Wings.—Mottled feather of the mallard.

VI. FLIES FOR NIGHT FISHING ON THE TWEED.

Mr. Forrest says that the bustard wing, with the "Professor" body and hackle, is very popular as a night fly.

He also furnished me with another, and the last fly, upon this list. It is ages since I fished at night, so I am quite out of it there.

VII. THE CORNCRAKE.

(A very Favourite Night Fly.)

Body.—Brown fur, tipped with gold lace.
Tail.—Two strands of red hackle.
Hackle.—Red hen.
Wings.—Wing of the landrail.

TABLE III.

SOME SIMPLY-DRESSED SINGLE-WINGED FLIES.

This style of fly, my preceptor, Mark Aitken, made me familiar with well over forty years ago. They are nameless flies, known amongst fishermen merely by the description of their various and very simple dressings, which I am naturally familiar with, and the method of dressing which, I found quite recently described in that valuable work, "Blacker's Art of Fly-making," published in London in the year 1855, and headed (at page 3) thus: "An Easy Method to make the Trout Fly." His mode of dressing such flies is almost identical with mine, save that Blacker dressed his fly with two wings, which neither I nor old Mark Aitken ever thought it necessary to do, finding as we did, that flies tied with a single wing, in a bunch, but sparely, and set upright, killed quite as well as the most elaborate flies in any fishing-tackle shop. I shall begin with a few of "Mark's" simple patterns.

Permit me to say that the "body" (unless I specially name it) will be neither more nor less than the tying silk, used in making the fly itself, and that I for one prefer yellow to any other colour, especially when it is waxed, more or less, with cobbler's wax, for the body of a wet fly.

I.

Hackle.—From any small dun feather, taken from the lark. "Mark" called it "the Laverock Hackle." At times a cock-y-bonddhu hen hackle is used instead.

Wing.—Corn-bunting.

Season.—April and May.

II.

Body and Hackle.—Formed by hare's ear spun round with the thread, and then picked out with a needle to form the "legs" of the fly.

Wing.—Inside of the woodcock wing.

Season.—April, and for general use.

III.

Hackle.—Cinnamon hen hackle.

Wing.—From the back of the hen pheasant.

Season.—May.

IV.

Hackle.—Soft black hen starling, or dun hackles from the feathers of small birds.

Wing.—Inside woodcock wing.

Season.—A generally useful and killing fly.

V.

Hackle.—Neck feather of cock starling.

Wing.—Wing feather of starling.

Season.—March, April, and May.

VI.

Hackle.—Hen (red or black).

Wing.—Mavis.

VII.

Hackle.—Dun hackle, or cock-y-bonddhu.
Wing.—Inside of quill feather of chaffinch.
Season.—April, May, June, and September.

VIII.

Hackle.—Black, or cock-y-bonddhu.
Wing.—Inside of feather, blackbird's wing.
Season.—April, May, June, September.

When this simple fly is dressed with a cock-y-bonddhu hackle, it is so near to Canon Greenwell's famous fly, that I feel almost inclined to withdraw it, and to apologize.

IX.

Hackle.—Black hen ; the body formed of black tying silk.
Wing.—The speckled feather of a teal drake.
Season.—A good April and May fly on some rivers.

X.

Hackle.—Corncrake ; the body dressed with dark brown silk.
Wing.—Dark portion of mavis wing, or the corncrake's wing.
Season.—A good all-round fly.

XI.

Hackle.—Badger like, grizzled hen hackle.
Wing.—Inside of woodcock wing feather.
Very useful fly, especially in dark weather.

XII.

Hackle.—This hackle, which is my own suggestion, is taken from the beautifully tapered hackle feathers on the head and cheeks of the Himalayan pheasant, the green-sheen feathers being more killing than those with the beautiful red-bronze sheen, in my experience.

Wing.—Inside of starling or water-hen wing.

Remarks.—These simple flies may be regarded as general "types" of the various ephemeridæ, etc., without in any way posing to be close imitations of any single one of them. I may add that, with the assortment of flies given here, I myself would feel confident to go all over Scotland and hold my own. Much of their virtue, in my humble opinion, consists in their extreme simplicity, and also in the fact that they are feathered with a sparing hand. There would not seem to be much need, in our wet-fly work, for dressing our flies in an elaborate way and with two wings, if, as I maintain, flies dressed with a single upright wing kill quite as well.

I have noticed, whenever I gave my old preceptor a few flies, dressed in Edinburgh by the late Mrs. Hogg, the wings tied in a bunch, but divided into two by means of the silk thread used while tying the fly, that he would give vent to his opinions by muttering to himself, "One-half owre muckle wing;" and off one of these two wings would go before he would use the fly.

He was never tired of preaching the superior virtues of soft feathers as against hard hackles, such as are usually associated with the barndoor cock, and above all other feathers, he seemed to be of opinion that the small feathers sometimes taken from the outside of the wing, sometimes from the inside, were the best feathers that could possibly be used for the legs of a fly, and, when you think of it, he was right, for they have infinitely more movement; which surely is an important matter. Try the experiment of placing two flies, one dressed with a hard cock hackle, and

the other dressed with a hackle such as I have described; in a tumbler of water, and then move them up and down. The cock hackle remains unsympathetic and rigid, while there is decided "movement" in the softer hackle. The only objection to the soft hackle that I can see, is, that it does not last long; and the man who makes this objection, need not expect my sympathy, if he is not so successful as he might be, when trout need some catching.

Finally; the thinness of the body, consisting as it does only of the tying silk, is a feature vastly in its favour, in wet-fly fishing.

TABLE IV.

SOME USEFUL HACKLED FLIES ("SPIDERS").

I. WATER-HEN BLOA (*SCOTTICE* "BLAE").

Body.—The yellow tying silk, dubbed with water-rat (or mouse) fur, sparingly put on and ribbed over with the same silk.

Hackle.—From the inside of wing feather of water-hen.

Season.—A generally useful fly all through the season, and the best fly of its kind, in my opinion, for the fishing of "Waters." Very valuable also in river fishing.

II. STEWART'S BLACK HACKLE (OR "SPIDER").

Body.—The brown tying silk with which the fly is dressed. A reddish-orange silk makes a capital body.

Hackle.—The small tapered feather from neck of cock starling.

Season.—Generally useful all the season.

III. STEWART'S RED HACKLE (OR "SPIDER").

Body.—The yellow silk with which the fly is dressed.

Hackle.—From small feathers outside wing of the land-rail.

Season.—A specially good fly when the water is discoloured.

IV. PARTRIDGE HACKLE (OR "SPIDER").

Body.—Orange silk. When dressed with this colour, it is known as the "Orange Partridge." Likewise, when with yellow, it is called the "Yellow Partridge." One of the very best bodies, however, is the striped peacock quill.

Hackle.—Taken from the brown mottled feather from back of a partridge.

It is indeed, with its various bodies, a fly of the greatest importance in the fishing of "Waters," and even of rivers.

V. "LIGHT PARTRIDGE" (OR "GREY PARTRIDGE").

Body.—Yellow tying silk, waxed with colourless wax, and tipped with flat tinsel or gold lace.

Hackle.—A light (almost white) feather, with narrow black bars across it, taken from the breast of the partridge.

Season.—I have frequently done excellent work with this fly, particularly in April and May. It is one of my favourites.

VI. "THE TOD FLY" HACKLE.

Body.—The striped quill from moon feather of peacock.

Hackle.—The soft, pale, mottled feather from the inside of a woodcock's wing.

Remarks.—This will be found generally useful, but especially so in dull, cloudy weather.

VII. DARK SNIPE AND PURPLE.

Body.—Purple floss silk.

Hackle.—Small feather from outside wing of the snipe.

Season.—A good fly, especially in early spring.

One of Pritt's patterns.

VIII. DARK NEEDLE.

Body.—Orange tying silk.

Hackle.—A small feather taken from the darkest portion of the wing of a brown owl.

Season.—Especially good in cold and windy days.

One of Mr. Walbran's patterns.

IX. SNIPE BLOA OR BLAE.

Body.—Straw-coloured silk.

Hackle.—A feather taken from the inside of a snipe's wing.

Pritt's pattern.

X. GROUSE AND ORANGE.

Body.—Orange tying silk.

Hackle.—Freckled brown feather from the grouse.

A useful fly always, but especially so in a dark "porter-colour water."

XI. CURLEW.

Body.—Orange or yellow tying silk.

Hackle.—A small feather taken from the outside of a curlew's wing.

Especially good in a clear and low state of river.

XII. HIMALAYAN HACKLE.

Body.—Yellow tying silk, ribbed with yellow gimp or extremely fine gold wire.

Hackle.—Taken from the green feathers on the head and top of neck of the Himalayan pheasant.

This fly was unknown till I introduced it, many years ago, in the pages of the *Fishing Gazette*. I have found it, at times, an excellent fly.

XIII. SEA SWALLOW AND YELLOW.

Body.—Pale yellow silk, waxed with colourless wax.

Hackle.—The pale and delicate feather from the outside of a sea-swallow's wing.

This fly may be used when the skies are full of dazzling white clouds, and fishing requires skill.

Mr. Pritt and Mr. Walbran give somewhat similar dressings.

XIV. DOTTEREL AND ORANGE.

Body.—The orange tying silk.

Hackle.—A small feather from outside of the male dotterel's wing.

Some General Remarks on "Hackled" Flies.

When dealing with the fishing of "Waters" with the wet fly, had I been asked to name one particular class more suitable than any other for this purpose, I should certainly have named *hackled flies*, the "*Spiders*" of Stewart's book. I do not mean for a moment that in doing so I should have necessarily excluded *winged* flies altogether. But, if I were asked to choose between the exclusive use of "winged" or "hackled" flies, I should then give my vote in favour of wingless artificials (call them how you like) for the fishing of tributary streams—that is, *Waters*. They are very often deadly, even in large rivers, and, I need hardly say, are particularly suitable for the fishing of burns, but in the fishing of Scottish "Waters," from the time of Stewart, down to the present day, these "hackled" flies "take a lot of beating." Even before Stewart wrote his book, the

value of the "hackled" fly was known and appreciated.

I will now suppose that I am asked which of all the *hackled flies* I would place at the head of the list for general wet-fly work?

If I were asked the same question in connection with well-known *winged* flies, I should name "Greenwell's Glory" without a moment's consideration; so I shall now name a "hackled" fly which is at present not so universally known in Scotland as it deserves to be, I mean the "Waterhen-bloa." The Yorkshire word "bloa," is the equivalent of our good old Scottish word *blae*. The "Water-hen Bloa" is, as I have remarked, a Yorkshire fly, but is fast finding its way into Scotland. Many years ago, I gave the pattern to Mr. Forrest of Kelso, and urged him to get his clients to try it. I also asked his sons, who are, of course, good fishermen; to give it a practical trial.

Since I have named "Greenwell's Glory" as the best all-round winged fly for wet-fly work that I have ever used, and have likewise named the "Water-hen Bloa" as probably the best for the fishing of Scottish or North of England "Waters,"

I think it will be interesting to see, if we cannot discover why it is that these two flies take such a very prominent position on my lists of "winged" and "hackled" flies.

Just let us examine these two flies in detail, with the view of comparing their respective dressings, their "buskings," as it used to be called in Scotland, and still is by old-fashioned people.

I begin with "Greenwell's Glory." The wings are made from the quill feather of a blackbird, tied in a bunch and split—that is, they are divided by the thread used in tying the fly itself. A soft hen's hackle of the kind known to fly dressers everywhere as a "Cock-y-bonddhu," forms the "legs" of the fly. The "body" is quite simple, and is formed of the yellow tying silk with which Canon Greenwell always got the late old Jamie Wright, of Sprouston, to dress the fly. The yellow tying silk is waxed with cobbler's wax, which imparts to it a greenish-yellow look. Finally, the body is ribbed over with the thin wire which can easily be unrolled from a piece of ordinary yellow gimp, and, failing that, with very thin gold wire. That is the correct dressing of "Greenwell's

Glory." Many use the wing of the water-hen instead of that of the blackbird. It makes an excellent fly, and I have never discovered that the trout are sufficiently educated to notice the difference.

Now let us examine the dressing of the "Water-hen Bloa," that splendid hackled fly.

I see that some angling authorities, when describing the hackled varieties of artificial flies, gravely put down the dressing of each fly thus—*Wings*, and here the name of that particular hackled fly is given. *Body*, so and so. Now, this is ridiculous! One might as well (in a Police Court case) describe a prisoner who had been caught red-handed in his shirt-sleeves as "wearing a frock coat of gray" (or blue).

I propose to adopt another plan, the plan of calling a spade a spade, and a hackle a hackle.

The body of the "Water-hen Bloa" is made thus.

It is tied with yellow tying silk, waxed with colourless wax, dubbed very sparingly with fur from the water-rat or the water-mouse. Even the fur of the mole may be used when the other is not

procurable. The two main points are, To lay on the fur with a very sparing hand, and if you do this, the second point almost follows as a natural consequence, that you always can see *plainly* the yellow tying silk, running in ribs down the body of the fly. It makes a unique and splendid body. In fact, without *the body*, I should regard the fly itself, as being less worthy of the high place I have accorded it in my list of "hackled flies," misnamed spiders *in Scotland.*

The Hackle.

This is taken from the small soft feathers inside the wing of the water-hen.

Practical fishermen and fly dressers will see at a glance, that there is a great deal in common between these two flies, and I think that you have only got to look at the natural "Blue Dun" when it first makes its appearance, leaden and dull of hue; and, again, when the little "Iron Blue" puts in an appearance, to account for the fact that, as during the whole fly-fishing season, one or other of these flies are generally to be found on our "Waters" and "Rivers;" these imitations, therefore, should always have a place on the fly-cast of every practical wet-fly fisherman. If

this be done, the result will not be found disappointing, provided, of course, that the lure is presented to the trout with skill, and that the angler possesses "watercraft," a most essential element in the making-up of any wet-fly fisherman.

Having named the "hackled" fly which, I think on the whole, probably deserves the topmost place, I will now name its formidable rival, which is much better known and more frequently used in Scotland. I mean the black Spider of Stewart's book, and which that most famous fisher of Scottish "Waters" thus describes.

"*The Black spider.*"

"This is made from the small neck feather of the cock starling, dressed with brown silk;" and, he adds, "it is, upon the whole, the most killing imitation we know."

Pritt's "Dark Snipe and Purple" is another fly of similar characteristics.

And here I would point out the significance of the fact that, the last-named are, *all of them, dark flies*; and, that each of them is more or less famous. How far the trout are able to choose between these flies, especially when they are used under water, as wet flies are, who can say?

When we try to speculate on such matters, it is "but shrewd guessing."

My own feeling is, that trout take them as imitations of one or other of the insects I have named already, viz. the *Blue Dun*, as it at first appears, with leaden-coloured wings: the *Iron Blue*. I have frequently felt, though it is impossible to prove, *that trout may occasionally feed upon the natural fly, as it is ascending to the surface.* At other times I have imagined—for who can observe what is invisible to himself?—that, in early spring, when the temperature of the water is nearly down to freezing-point, and the wind seems blowing from an iceberg, that the flies may make an honest effort to rise to the surface; but, losing vitality through becoming benumbed, may be carried helplessly down stream, being thus picked up by any hungry trout.

My reasons for thinking so are, that, many and many a day, when no flies have been visible on the surface—and, as a direct consequence, few or no trout break the surface in the welcome "rise"—a fisherman, if he only understands the secret of fishing with a sunk fly, can, *even then*, often get a large basket of trout.

Under such circumstances a "*pull*,"

instead of a "rise," is what the fly-fisherman looks out for—*and receives.*

During the first week of May, in 1877, I was busily fishing "the Tummel," with frost and snow all round me, and I experienced this in a very notable degree.

Curiously, even now, I remember that my best fly was one I dressed with the neck hackle-feather of the cock starling, but with the addition of a mere dot of "peacock herl," placed immediately under the hackle itself. I presume that it gives additional lustre to this imitation, and so attracts the trout, especially in cold dark days, when he is not inclined to show his nose on the surface of the water.

For the fishing of "waters," Hackled flies (spiders) are proverbally valuable. But they fill a very useful place, at times, in the fishing of larger rivers.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONCLUSION.

When I look back, I thank the good fortune which made me a wet-fly fisherman, in my early youth. Over and above its pleasures, who can ignore the value of a recreation, so wholesome, in every way.

My angling holidays have been more than delightful—and their retrospect ever makes me grateful.

This may seem to be nothing, and yet it means much.

To me, a holiday spent in a country where good river fishing was not possible, was like some flavourless dish, pleasant to the eye; but, a thing wherein we know there is some hidden want: as Shelley puts it.

For many years I had to be gladly contented with one yearly holiday of (say) three

weeks or so, and I was lucky to be able to take it, angling for trout!

I could imagine nothing more aimless and uninteresting than my holidays would have been had I spent them otherwise.

Of course, I write, not only as an angler, but as a professed enthusiast.

The interest—the keen interest—which fly-fishing has always aroused in me, has often given me fresh life—when run down by ill-health—and, I am bound to add, that I owe a debt to it, which I can barely appreciate, and, certainly, never can repay.

But I must say no more of this.

I have touched upon the fascinations of burn fishing—I have written about waters, and rivers; and, I have endeavoured to show how much interest there is to be got from the patient study of fishing with the wet fly.

I hope, and I believe, that I have not laboured wholly in vain.

At times I have felt a consciousness of not always being able to recall the little one knows, a gentle reminder that a man's memory "hath bounds and stays" at sixty-four!

The more we know of any subject we

seem to appreciate how much more there is still hidden from our ken.

> We pride ourselves on knowledge,
> Yet the little that we know
> Seems like the mist ascending
> From the great world below;
> Which storms, with voice of thunder,
> Sweep onward into space.
> The Earth stands fast—its vapour,
> Once scattered—who can trace!

I have now placed the flies under *four* separate Tables, hoping in this way to avoid confusion. A few words of explanation will, I think, be advisable.

Table I. contains all the flies which I think will be found necessary, and especially for the fishing of Rivers. Most of them belong to my own select list.

Table II. contains a list of seven flies, some of them of famous repute; and I should fail in my duty did I not give their respective names and dressings.

Table III. contains a list of winged flies, without any particular name, or designation. They are dressed in the very simplest way. I do not wish it to be thought, that I place them above the winged flies in Tables I. and II., but, I maintain that they are (in capable hands) able to take

care of themselves, when it comes to the only real test.

Table IV. contains a comprehensive list of "hackled" flies (spiders). These are specially recommended for the fishing of "Waters," but they are not a bit "out of it," when our larger Rivers get low.

I look forward to a day, which I myself shall never see; and I am full of pathetic wonderment as to what it may bring forth.

Thank Heaven! I have lived to see a close time for trout throughout Scotland. Yet this is only (in my opinion) the first stage, in a much-needed and far-reaching reform.

And now I must conclude, for "Time is up."

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